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# Jesse Walker, Pioneer Preacher



By Richard J. Crook

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

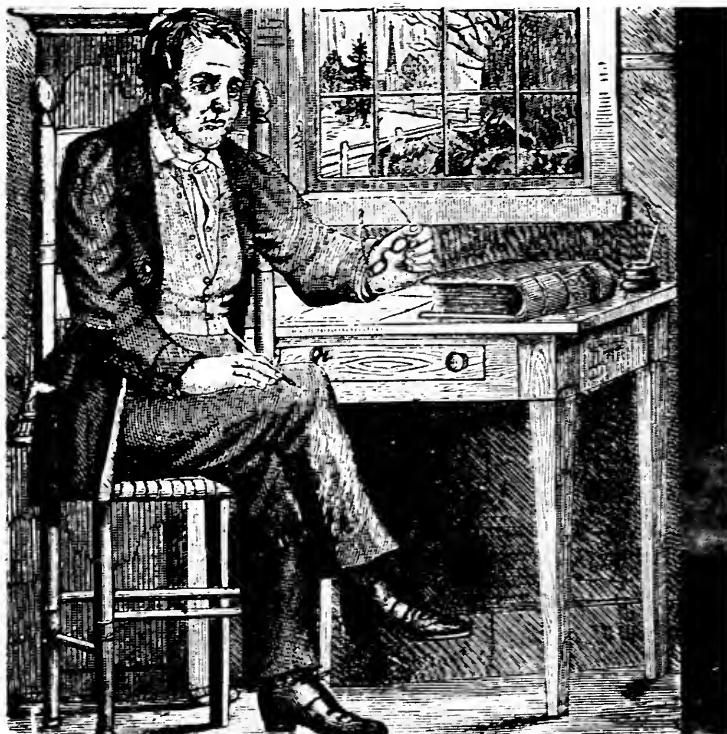




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1976  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were many people who helped to make this book a reality, my benefactors were friends, acquaintances, and wayfaring strangers. A suggestion, a casual comment, a tip, a hunch: an individual and collective thoughtfulness led to the making of this story.

Among those people I wish to thank are: The staff of the Plainfield Public Library, Miss Mary Tracy of the library at Joliet Central High School, the staff of the Joliet West High School Library, the Plainfield United Methodist Church Library, Ione Mueller for the use of some of her pictures, Irv and Jim Johnson and their staff at the **Plainfield Enterprise** for all of their help in finally getting this project printed and out to the general public for, I hope, their enjoyment; my wife, Marcia, and family for putting up with me over the last four years while I have been researching, writing, and editing and correcting, and publishing this venture; and Mrs. Elda Testin for the use of her book, **Pages from the Early History of the West and North-West: etc.** by the Rev. Stephen R. Beggs, over a very long period of time.

And a special big thanks to Mrs. Lorraine Haffer who was kind enough to type the final draft of my original manuscript. This, on top of her regular duties as our church secretary, was a big help to me and I want her to know that I appreciated it.

August, 1976

Richard J. Crook



### **The Circuit-Ridin' Preacher**

The circuit ridin' preacher used to ride across the land,  
With a rifle on his saddle and a Bible in his hand;  
He told the prairie people all about the promised land,  
As he went riding, singing down the trail.

The circuit ridin' preacher traveled thru the mire and mud,  
Told about the fiery furnace and of Noah and the flood;  
He preached the way to heaven was by water and the blood,  
As he went riding, singing down the trail.

-----An old American Melody

# JESSE WALKER, PIONEER PREACHER

## Introduction

I have been a resident of Plainfield, Illinois now for the past eleven years (Plainfield, formerly known as Walker's Grove) and a member of the Plainfield United Methodist Church on whose Administrative Board and Commission on Social Concerns I have served. My wife, Marcia, is also currently the church treasurer. Since my time here my wife and I have served seven different pastors and their assistants in different ways, i.e., youth work, Lenten programs, membership drives, different committees, etc. In this time I have become aware of and interested in the founding of our church and the community of Plainfield. It was in this regard that I first heard of Rev. Jesse Walker, who has been called "The Daniel Boone of Methodism" and a "horseman of God". It was he who began Methodism in both Illinois and Missouri, as well as having preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and the word of God in other regions, including: Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Arkansas, and Wisconsin. It was also he who laid the beginnings of the Methodist Church in the communities of Peoria, St. Louis, and Chicago, as well as here in Plainfield.

Gathering material and information on Jesse Walker has been a difficult assignment. All I had to go on before were generalities, hearsay, and a couple of things I was able to uncover in our church office. He appears to have been well known among his friends and personal acquaintances; and mention is made of him in the **Will County History**. It seems though that Rev. Walker was a modest man who didn't spend much time trying to immortalize himself. Much has been written about him, but sparingly and this is somewhat hard to trace. Men of lesser fame have written their own stories, but it seems Jesse Walker never did and, if indeed he did, it has since been lost to us. Also, his trail is difficult to follow for he covered a great deal of territory during his pioneer ministry on the frontier. Frontiers are not known for their newspapers, nor for giving people the time to read and write things like journals or diaries. Jesse Walker's frontier was no different. We must remember too that he lived here about one hundred and fifty years ago and time has a way of making the past appear dim

and distant. So, when preparing this manuscript it was under these difficulties and drawbacks that I labored; I only hope that the end result will not disappoint you too much.

In this paper on the life and career of the Rev. Jesse Walker I will draw largely on a few limited, but original sources and writings. We have access to personal accounts of Walker by John Scripps and the Bishop Thomas A. Morris, who both traveled many long and weary miles with him in the wilderness. I also use the work of the Rev. Stephen R. Beggs, who quotes from a "manuscript" which may have been prepared by Walker himself and later lost, and he adds information of his own that he got firsthand from Jesse Walker during their four or five year association here in northern Illinois when Walker was by then in his latter years. Peter Cartwright, who was also very famous in his own right, was a close, personal friend of Walker's and he leaves us some, brief information of him. I draw on that relationship in this paper. The Rev. A. D. Field, a Methodist historian of the Rock River Conference, followed closely on Walker's career, especially in Chicago, and he leaves us some information and later material which I use here. There have been references made to Walker also by others who knew him, but they are rather small, brief, and scattered and not really of too much use to me in this endeavor.

So, once again in conclusion, I repeat that this writing jcb, especially in the research aspect, has been a difficult, but interesting one. I have dug out of old and dusty sources what I can and I tell here what I am able to tell. My satisfaction is that you will at least know more after having read this than you did before about the Reverend Jesse Walker, the pioneer preacher, and the founding of Methodism here in the Old Northwest Territory. He was a true "Man of God" who came to the frontier to spread "the Word" to Indian and white alike. He never asked for praise or honor, but I think he is due that now, at least and at last.

## A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO

"In 1823, two men mounted on jaded horses, approached an Indian village of the Pottawatamies at or near what was

known as Walker's Grove. One of the men was Rev. Jesse Walker, the earliest pioneer missionary among the natives. He was a short, thick, heavy-set man with a dark skin, made darker by exposure, and with an erect and dignified figure. He had been accompanied by Bishop McKendree when he came to the Southern Illinois country in 1806 from Virginia, having been appointed by the Methodist conference as a missionary to the Indians.

One day some years later, the pioneer missionary had with him a newcomer in the tall young preacher, Rev. Stephen R. Beggs, called by him as an aid in his work, which had begun to wear on the older pioneer. At the Indian village the clergymen were warmly greeted, and there found a colored man, known as 'Black Bob', whom Rev. Mr. Walker had often found helpful as an interpreter. The white men spoke and the colored man interpreted the message to the red men.

The religious exercises led to conversions, and to additions to the church through immersions in a near-by river, believed to be that known as the DuPage. At this time, Rev. Mr. Walker wore a straight-breasted coat, drab in color, and a broad-brimmed white beaver hat, while Rev. Mr. Beggs dressed in a green coat and a fur hat that showed marked traces of exposure to the elements."(1)

With the foregoing as a glimpse of this pioneer preacher, let us now go back and look at Jesse Walker's beginnings and life. He was born in Buckingham County, Virginia, near the James River, on June 9, 1766 to Elmore and Mary LeSelle Walker. It is recorded that his birth was twenty-five years before the death of John Wesley. Jesse was the oldest of seven children; he had a sister and five brothers. In most frontier homes children came with some regularity, and the Walker home was no different.

Let us detour for a moment and look at the other Walker children and what became of them, so as to get them out of the way so we may better concentrate on Jesse later. It seems the boys, not unlike Jesse, were to grow up also with the yen to travel or had what was called "the moving fever." James moved to Tennessee, near Nashville. Jesse also later located on White's Creek near Nashville. Richard had three sons, Joseph, Elmore, and John. This mentioned Elmore Walker was a Methodist minister and a member of the Indiana Conference.

Elmore's son, Jesse Lafayette, became a Methodist preacher too and entered the Indiana Conference on trial in 1855. He later became a chaplain in the Union Army and served under General William Tecumseh Sherman. In 1866 he was transferred into the Missouri-Arkansas Conference; he is reported to have said that he was drawn there because that was the fruitful field of the labors of his great-uncle, Jesse Walker. This same man, Jesse Lafayette Walker, later served as the presiding elder of the Springfield district, 1867-1868; St. Louis district, 1869-1871; Kansas City district, 1875-1876; and the Springfield district, 1877-1882. He died July 16, 1882 from over work and exposure, a loved and honored man in the tradition of his worthy ancestor. Dr. David Walker, the fourth son, also migrated to Tennessee, and from there on to St. Clair County, Illinois, and later still to LaSalle County, Illinois. In 1823 he took up land where Ottawa now stands and became a prominent citizen of that county. His son, George E., was the first sheriff of LaSalle County. Another son, David, became the county's recorder. This appears to be what is known about the rest of the Walker family; and I cannot testify to just how accurate some of this is.(2)

Jesse was not blessed with religious parents, but yet they were moral, upright people. They taught him to pray and attend divine worship regularly while still at a young age. Lying and profanity were strictly forbidden to him. He was instructed to abstain from gross errors and sins. His father was neither rich, nor poor, and taught him to work and the value of true labor. With nine mouths to feed and care for there was plenty for everyone in the family to do, including Jesse. The Walker home and farm was a busy place for there were animals to feed, to be tended and cared for, fields to be cultivated, crops to be cared for, wood to be cut, gardens to be planted and cared for, fruit and vegetables to be put up, butter, lard and soap to be made, cloth to be woven, and hunting and fishing for food to do. This all added up to enough work to go around and it involved the whole family, children as well as parents. Jesse, since he was the oldest, began work as a child and assumed increasing responsibility for the family's support as he grew older.

Jesse's school privileges were few and his education, you could say, was rather limited. His formal schooling was limited

to twenty days, and what schooling he did get he got at home and from his work. His short school term seems to indicate that he did have some instruction at home for he had learned to read and write, even though poorly. All of his life he felt the handicaps of his limited, backwoods education and he always tried to make the most of what he had had, as little as it was.(3)

When Jesse was nine years old his mother took him to a Baptist meeting and it was here under the influence of the sermon that he had his first awakening to his own individual responsibility to God. Soon after this he often reflected on the miseries of hell and thought of the judgement day to the point where he would be shaken with a trembling; at this point he would begin to pray in earnest for his heavenly salvation. Soon after this experience, he is reported to have said:

I heard another preacher, who told me how to pray and exercise faith in believing on the Lord Jesus. The next morning, as I was walking along, the Lord gave me such a spirit of wrestling that my faith took hold on God; and, in a moment, such a light broke in upon my soul, and such beams of Divine love, that I praised his hallowed name for the unspeakable riches he had bestowed upon my poor soul. I enjoyed his presence for years; but no one having spoken to me about joining the Church, I consequently did not present myself. I soon began to mix with the wicked, and lost my enjoyment, backsliding from one thing to another till I became very wicked, and even doubted my conversion. Then, to quiet my conscience, I tried to believe the doctrines of Calvinism, besides going to every Baptist meeting to confirm myself in the dogma of fate. In my most solemn moments I could not believe these things myself, and yet I often labored hard to make others believe them. My besetting sin was profanity, which was often a great cause of grief to my mother and sister. The strivings of the Holy Spirit had left me and I often feared that my damnation was sealed, and that the earth would open and swallow me up. I thought men and devils had combined to take away the last vestige of comfort that was left me. At last I fell on my face, and, with all my guilt and weight of sin, hell seemed to move from beneath to meet me at my coming.

But in my extreme anguish of spirit of God showed himself unto me; and by faith I realized such a fullness in Jesus that I once more ventured out on his precious promises; and I found, of a truth, that the virtue of his blood shed for me had healed every wound that sin had made. Then I felt to exclaim, O loving Savior! blessed Jesus! I now consecrate my all to thee, for time and eternity; thou art the one altogether lovely, and I will praise thee with all my powers. Then I went out to find a fellow Christian, that I might talk with him of my newly found happiness. It was on the Sabbath day; and I had barely commenced telling him, when he proposed to me to swap horses. I regret to say that this man was a member of the Baptist Church; but so it was, and it had the influence to turn me to seek some other denomination than that toward whose members I had always felt such a brotherly love. I remembered that there was a Methodist class meeting about twelve miles distant; and I turned my horse, in hopes of getting there before the meeting closed. I was too late; and I dismounted and knelt down and prayed for direction. Then I remembered that the members were to return by a certain house, and I stayed there and awaited their arrival. Their songs seemed so heavenly that they exceeded any thing that I had yet heard. When they began to talk on the subject of religion, I found that their experience was like my own, and that it was no more nor less than the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Then, when I began to tell them what God had done for me, the power of the Lord came down. While some prayed, others were praising and singing; and sinners began to cry for mercy. The meeting continued all night. In the morning I returned home, rejoicing, on my way, and blessing God for what I had seen, and for what my poor soul had enjoyed. When I got home, and told them of God's goodness, they thought I was crazy; and my exhortations to them to seek the Lord were so strange to them that I feared that my message was as seed sown by the wayside.

It was not long before I visited again my brethren in class, and I was called upon to lead the class. It was a great trial to me, and yet I bore the cross. During our

exercises the Lord poured out his spirit again. Some shouted aloud, and others cried for mercy, and such a time of power was it that it lasted till the dawn of day. Such a meeting I had never witnessed before. Soon after this our new preacher came on from Conference. He preached with great power, and invited such as wished to join on trial to remain in class. I embraced this, my first opportunity, and joined the Church in July, 1786. I was appointed class-leader; and the burden of lost souls was so rolled upon me that I gave myself up wholly to the work. Seeing me such a laborer in the Vineyard, the preachers soon wished me to accompany them on the circuit. My inability kept me back from some time; but at last I felt the command--'Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel'--in such an imperious manner that I gave myself up to the great work. I offered myself, and was received on probation 1804, and appointed, as the Minutes show, to the Red River circuit; in 1805 to Livingston; in 1806 to Hartford circuit, William McKendree presiding elder.(4)

What I have just related comes from Jesse Walker's own "manuscript", at least, according to the Rev. Stephen R. Beggs in his book, **Pages from the Early History of the West and North-West.** This was Walker's own conversion to Methodism and Christianity in his own words. This spanned the time period of his life between the ages of nine and twenty, or as we refer to it today, his adolescent years. As every adult should know these are difficult years for anyone to live through, but it seems that they were particularly trying for the young Jesse Walker who was attempting to make his peace with God and find his "place" in the scheme of things around him.

It seems that the church in the wilderness was rather negligent of its young people, as we are sometimes yet today. More attention, it seems, was given to the adult members of the church. Young Jesse found no one to listen to him and give him comfort in his searching for eternal truths. In the course of time it seems he slid into bad habits and was swallowed up by the temporal world. He began to think less about God's word and heaven and even less yet, it seems, about hell and his

soul's damnation. He prayed less and less and stopped going to church entirely. He was a fast growing boy in his teens and like many boys of this age, even today, he became very wicked and profane by the social mores and standards of the day. Even though drunkenness was common at that time in that place, it doesn't seem to appear in the record that Jesse ever became dissipated to the point of not being able to handle himself. It appears though that he was in a state of worldly sin up to the age of eighteen. In spite of this, or maybe because of it, he appears to have been a rather popular young man from glimpses we are able to gleen of him. But as has already been stated in his own narrative, at about the age of twenty he was saved from his brief, young life of sin. It was at this point that God reached down and chose him to go forth into the field and preach the gospel to the other frontier sinners. It was from this time through the rest of his life that Jesse Walker became the "horseman of God." He went out to preach "the Word" to whomever would listen.

At about the same time Jesse experienced his conversion to Methodism it seems he met the girl who was to become his wife in the not too distant future; she was Susannah Webly. Let us for a moment go back and learn what we can about her family. Apparently the Walkers and the Weblys lived in the same general neighborhood, but they were of distinctly different social strata. Susannah's father, Colonel Webly, was a rich, aristocratic, English gentleman. He, with his family, was a staunch Virginia Episcopalian. He also was a plantation owner who held slaves. This family lived in an aristocratic fashion with parties, sports, liquor, clothes, position, prestige, and slaves.(5) The Weblys had two children, a son and a daughter. The son seems to have been a young man of character and breeding. He also appears to have been industrious and on the way to wealth for he had holdings in the West Indies which required him to go from time to time to London, England on business. It was on one of these trips that he became shipwrecked and lost at sea. This was to leave his sister, Susannah, alone and it was at about this point that she too was converted to Methodism and met and fell in love with our hero, Jesse Walker.

But before I digress too much, let's take a closer look at Susannah in her younger life. "...She was a gay young lady,

dressing in the highest styles of fashion, and engaging in all the sinful amusements of the day. She mingled in all the gayest gatherings of the old Virginia chivalry. And we may add here that she was highly educated---In the midst of her gay life, Susannah Webly--probably in the same revival with Jesse Walker--was powerfully converted, and at the same time she joined the Methodist Church. She laid aside her gaudy apparel, her friends making mention even of a large silver back-comb she laid aside; she freed her slaves, keeping two of the girls in the family to aid in the housework, and, to end all, married the poor but zealous young Jesse Walker...."(6) Thus it was that the Young Susannah lived in this period, but this was traditional southern planter style. The children of the rich and aristocratic grew up with a sense of position and responsibility. It appears Susannah acquired a commendable degree of education which was to prove a valuable asset in her later years. It was in this period of frivolity and good times that her social world came down around her for within a short time both her parents died and, not long thereafter, her brother was lost at sea as already stated. All of this sadness and bereavement at once seemed to quench her gay, young spirit. At this point she turned from her formal religious teachings to seek a better source of spiritual comfort.

At this time the Methodists were holding camp meetings in the area. Camp meetings in that day were very popular and drew both favorable and unfavorable attention. They seemed to appeal more to the common people and the rich, well-born, and aristocratic sometimes sneered at these "...sometimes boisterous proceedings of the Methodists..."(7) and on occasion, they even sought to restrain or break up these meetings and their affects in the neighborhood. It was here in her distress that Susannah Webly went and where she found her inner peace and salvation. As a result of this, as has already been pointed out, Susannah took her new-found religion very seriously. She dropped the gay and frivolous crowd with whom she had associated and put aside the fancy clothes and airs, freed her slaves, and gave herself wholly to her new religion. Some thought her a fool, but she had found "The pearl of great price."

To top it all off, her friends must have thought her completely crazy and bizarre when she climaxed her religious

fervor by marrying the poor, socially inferior, Methodist convert and preacher, Jesse Walker. This, from the best estimates available, must have been in or about 1788. Probably the two had met or known one another before, but we don't know the details of their romantic relationship. It was definitely the similar religious conversion though that welded them together for their lifetimes. "...She was from the first an ardent Christian worker; but, out of respect to her, her husband hesitated to undertake the work of a Methodist preacher..."(8) It is assumed that Susannah brought to her marriage at least a small amount of money and modest estate which she had inherited from her parents. Talking about this marriage one source said: "...He (referring to Jesse) married the daughter of a wealthy planter who was heir to much property in slaves. These she manumitted, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, and as the wife of a Methodist minister, than to enjoy the ease and comfort which could be secured by the sweat of unpaid toil. Like Moses, she no doubt had respect unto the recompense of the reward, and, no doubt, like him, she had entered upon that reward and does not regret her choice..."(9)

From the record it appears Jesse and Susannah Walker were very happy together in their wedded bliss as are most young newly married couples. She was proud of her strong and dedicated husband and he was proud of his pretty and tender "gentle born" wife. She was pleased with the recognition given her young husband by the presiding elders and the circuit riders. He too was soon licensed and permitted to take charge of services or to ride along with the circuit preachers. The other preachers wanted him to become a full-time circuit rider too, but he declined on behalf of his wife. Later he was to accept the "call" and go, with his wife's blessings. Shortly after their marriage, the newlyweds joined the movement to North Carolina motivated by the same desires that impelled others to travel on to "greener pastures". Most of these migrants were moving westward and southwestward seeking cheaper and better land. This move probably occurred about 1789, as far as we can tell.

Not too much is known about this period of their lives in this new country. We do know that he exercised his local preacher's office and that he supported his family by dressing furs and by

preparing deer hides for dress for people. "...To understand what this means we must remember that this was previous to 1800, when all the country west of Virginia was 'backwoods' country, and when dressed deer-skin was the most common material for clothing. Even Abraham Lincoln, in Illinois, as late as 1830 wore buckskin pantaloons...."(10) This was no mean occupation in those days, but was, in fact, a lucrative business. Skins and furs were in great demand for frontier dress. Out of them they made gloves, jackets, pants, and capes. Cloth was hard to come by on the frontier and usually only the wealthy could afford to buy it. The common man out here wore buckskins and the women wore "linsey-woolsey."

During all these sixteen years (1786-1802) the preachers and Walker's own convictions were urging him to take up the itinerant work. He was now -- in 1802 -- thirty-four years of age. He had a family of four children, and felt that he had no ability to do the work required. This suggests his modesty, and is one reason, no doubt, why he preferred to preach to the frontier rather than more settled communities. After long resistance, he yielded to duty under the stroke of affliction. He entered his home one day to find his children very sick. Soon two little boys, who died in two hours of each other, were laid out for the same grave. In this hour himself and his wife yielded to the heavenly call. The wife, the noble Susannah, from that hour bade him go where duty led, and she would care for the home. She never after looked back, but through the thirty years that followed was Jesse Walker's greatest earthly encouraging force. Walker sent up his name, and was in 1802 re-received into the Western Conference as a laborer. He went to Red River, in Tennessee, and in this, his first year, he gave Peter Cartwright license to exhort. He filled some of the difficult appointments in Tennessee and Kentucky until 1806....(11)

As indicated above, the Walker family had increased to four children. The oldest child, Polly, was probably born before they had left Virginia. The sister, Jane, was born in Tennessee on October 13, 1799. The other two children, as stated, were boys

and it is not certain whether they were born in North Carolina or Tennessee, but it seems they both died in the latter state. This must have been a very difficult time for Susannah for she had many responsibilities, including: sewing, weaving, quilting, washing, cooking, nursing, and other things to do. This must have taken all of her time and energy, but I guess that her life was no different than that of other women on the frontier. In addition, Susannah carried on the education of her children, since she herself had been educated.(12) With her husband often gone on preaching missions, she had her time well taken with her wifely and motherly chores. This appears to have been the Walker's lives while they lived in North Carolina and continued after their move to Tennessee. Sources agree that they migrated to Tennessee near the end of the century and settled within a few miles of Nashville. "...This is confirmed by William Burke who was on the Cumberland Circuit in 1798. He says, 'About this time, a number of local preachers migrated and located in the Cumberland Circuit. Jesse Walker settled at White's Creek....'"(13)

Land records in Davidson County, Tennessee, have three interesting items of land transfers: '1796, 'Jesse Walker of Thomas Hickman, lying on the north side of the Cumberland River, of the waters of Drake Creek, joining an entry of Martin Armstrong on the north, etc.' April 10, 1797, 'Jesse Walker of Martin Armstrong, asses. of Jonathen Richards, enters two hundred seventy-four acres of land on head waters of White's Creek beginning on north boundary of survey by Major Howell Tattem and to run from said line north and west, etc.' ...(1802) 'On headwaters of White's Creek, being a part of the tract of land James Gatlin purchased of Robert Hayes, and said Jesse Walker from said Gatlin'... 'About twenty poles Abner Johnson's southwest corner, west of his corner on a beech running thence on a west direction thirty poles to a beech, thence south twenty-two poles to a sugar tree, thence west seventy-five poles to a stake, thence north direction one hundred six poles to a beech, thence south on an east direction twenty-seven poles to a sugar tree, thence south  $40^{\circ}$ , east eighty-eight poles to beginning, seventy acres to be same, more or less....'"(14) From that just stated, it would appear that Jesse Walker owned or possessed more of the world's goods than anyone thought. This may help clear him of the

poverty-stricken stereotype which many have of him. He seems to have dealt in land where ever he happened to be, i.e.. Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and later, in at least two locations in Illinois, one near Belleville and another in Cook County. One historian said of him, "Jesse Walker prospered in business."

A man by the name of McFerrin in a book entitled, **Methodism in Tennessee**, says that Jesse Walker organized the Mt. Zion Church in 1798, four years before he joined the Conference, and that he had lived a few hundred yards from this church. Mt. Zion was on the Red River Circuit when Walker was appointed to it in 1802. This was also mentioned in a statement by the Rev. W. E. Couser, pastor of the Red River Circuit in 1942. He said, "According to the records I have found, Brother Jesse Walker organized the first Methodist Church in Robertson County, Tennessee, in the home of Samuel Crockett, a Revolutionary War soldier and leader among early settlers in Tennessee, in the year 1798. Tennessee had been a state only two years at the time. Indians were still in this part of the state."(15) The first log church building of Mt. Zion was erected in 1804; the second building in 1844 and the third building in 1883. "...Patrick and Thomas Martin gave two acres of land for the church and a cemetery. Many early preachers of prominence visited Mt. Zion Church including: Peter Cartwright, Bishops McKendree, Morris and Payne, and Circuit preachers, Lewis Garrett, Thomas and James Gorin, Patrick and Thomas Martin. Cartwright and Morris were among the pastors...."(16) Also, White's Creek begins near Union Hill, Davidson County, Tennessee and in this region is found a Walker's Creek and a Walker Methodist Church. Not much is known of the origins of this creek and church, but they must have had some connection with Jesse Walker's having been in those parts.

At the session of the Western Conference, held at Bethel Chapel, Cumberland District, Tennessee, October 1, 1802, he applied for admission as a traveling preacher. "...Bishop Asbury had traveled to the conference from Virginia, preaching as he came. He says in his journal concerning his trip: 'The heat, restless nights, the water, or it may be all these combined, make me sick indeed.' He arrived late at the conference, too sick to preach, but able to ordain candidates for

deacons and elders elders.''(17) He was received on trial for he had two counts against him: his age and the fact that he had a family. His acceptance though gives us an insight into his character and ability. Bishop Asbury adhered to the policy of shifting young men from the east to the west, and the western men to the east. They appeared to age early during service in the west. Dr. E. Robb Zaring, former editor of the **Northwestern Christian Advocate**, made a study in Indiana which revealed the following insights: "The first thirty men were in the ministry an average of 10 years plus and died at the average age of 38. The last thirty were in the ministry 38 years plus and died at the average of 64 years...."(18)

The salary of traveling preachers was only \$64 per year, from 1784 to 1800, and that included bishops and presiding elders. From 1792 traveling expenses were added. From 1800 to 1816, the salary of a preacher with a wife was \$80, and \$16 for each child seven to fourteen years of age. In 1816 the salary of preachers was increased to \$100 per year.....During the period 1802 to 1811, the Western Conference minutes showed deficiencies in preacher's salaries from the circuits of \$16,217.87. Of this deficiency the Charter Fund, the Book Concern and other sources made up \$4,350.25, leaving \$11,867.62 deficit on their meager salaries....(19)

During this same period, Jesse Walker too showed deficiencies on salary receipts of \$773.17, of which amount the conference supplied \$383.34, leaving a deficit of \$389.83 for a period of eleven years. For the year 1802-1803, he reported a deficit of \$165.37. "The committee on distribution of relief funds reporting this claim said: 'and it appears to us that \$76 are for children. It is our judgement that the demand for children be deducted, and that he is in deficiency \$89.37....'"(20) So it appears that deficiencies were carefully watched and any selfishness was checked by the committee. That's the way it was for the hard working and poorly paid preachers of the day.

Walker was admitted on trial, as already stated, with Jacob Young, William Crutchfield, Ralph Lotspeich, James Gwin, and Leven Edney. All of these men were to do a good job and

give a good account of themselves. Jesse, along with seven others, was ordained deacon the same year of his admission on trial. He was eligible, it seems, because of his previous fifteen year's work.(21)

John Carr, in his book, **Early Times in Middle Tennessee**, says, according to Almer Pennewell in his book, "I saw Bishop Whatcoat ordain Jesse Walker, that excellent man of God, in Concord Meeting House, on Goose Creek, in the sight of which I lived. John McGee and John Paige, I think assisted in the ordination."(22) There doesn't seem to be any record of this, so it must have been made between sessions of the conference. Carr, in his book, also said of Jesse Walker, quoting again from Pennewell's book:

Jesse Walker was a man of little education but was a persevering, zealous preacher. His labors were greatly owned and blessed of the Lord wherever he went. James and Pleasant Axley and Peter Cartwright were the fruits of his revivals on the Livingston Circuit in 1803. Jesse Walker was aided by John Paige. His ardent, itinerant soul seemed to grasp the whole northwest region, ready to say, "Here am I, send me the poor, the needy, to the camp, to the woods, to the pathless desert, yea to the savage tribes, to carry the news of the redeeming love and to plant the standard of the Cross and gather into the fold of Christ scattered and perishing souls!" So fully did Walker measure up to this estimate of him that he was called 'a whole Church Extension Society within himself.'(23)

At about the time he was appointed to the Red River Circuit Methodism had not yet extended into the western part of the state of Kentucky. These people were scattered throughout the western counties and no effort had been made to try and organize them. They were just not beginning in earnest to do something about this long overlooked area of Christian concern. Walker's new circuit had no boundary on the north and northwest. This country was open, uncharted, and ripe for the taking; it was this kind of country that drew Jesse Walker to it like a magnet. From the record it appears Jesse had great success in his preaching endeavors there. Then in 1803 he was

appointed to the new Livingston Circuit which Peter Cartwright had surveyed and reported had about a hundred new church members. This was to be a year of hardship and grief for the Walker family for, according to Cartwright, this was the year their two sons died. However, in spite of this sadness and conflict Jesse labored even harder in God's vineyard doing His will. He sought out isolated settlers and preached in their log cabin homes and even went so far as holding open meetings in the woods. The Methodist Church was being expanded far and wide into new counties that had no organized churches to that time.

In 1804-1805 he moved into Breckenridge County and organized a class at Thomas Stith's, which was on the road from Hardinsburg to Louisville. In 1805 this circuit was divided and Jesse was appointed to a new circuit, Hartford, which included the counties of Ohio, Hancock, Meade, Breckinridge, Grayson, Butler, Muhlenberg, McLean, and Henderson. This left the counties farther west in the Livingston Circuit.(24)

At about this time the Presiding Elder, William McKendree, was manufacturing a dream and beginning to see a vision that he took to be manifest destiny for the Methodist Church. He had heard that the Louisiana Territory had passed into American hands by purchase from Napoleon and the French. He then devised a plan to carry the word of God into the settlements west of the Indian's "Great Father of Waters," the Mississippi River. He chose to send Circuit Riders, Jesse Walker and Lewis Garrett, to make a test of the region. As a result of McKendree's dream, the two men rode into Missouri and preached for a while and then returned to Kentucky. This was to be an interesting period of history for three major powers were vying for control of this area, not excluding the "native Americans" who were already there.

This trip not only showed the vision of McKendree and the courage and daring of the two circuit riders, but pointed up the fact that there had been no Methodist appointment there up to that time. "...John Travis, first man to be regularly appointed to Missouri, was sent out in the autumn of 1806. It is alledged in Missouri history that a Methodist class was found at Cape Girardeau by the first itinerant to visit that country after the date of Walker's excursion to Missouri. It would be interesting to know the details of this adventure into a stronghold of

Catholicism, the only region recognized by Spanish and French Louisiana....''(25)

The Rev. H. H. Jones, once a pastor at Hartford, Kentucky, wrote to Pennewell and related this story which is quoted here from Pennewell's book, **A Voice in the Wilderness**. It states:

There is still a story told in and around Hartford about Brother Walker. Here it is: A physically strong and rough fellow, who became angry for Walker's very plain preaching, rode up to Brother Walker's home. He rode his horse through a very narrow gate in a high slit-log, Indian-tight fence, to where Brother Walker was working on a ground sled, down on his knees driving nails. The big bully called out in a rough voice, 'Parson, you've got me to lick or git out'n this neck o' the woods.' Walker quietly arose, took the fellow by the seat of the pants and the nape of the neck, and dropped him over the high fence. The ruffian got himself together and peeked through a crack in the fence and humbly said, 'now, parson, if you'll hand my mar' over the fence, I'll be agoin!(26)

This, I think, makes a funny frontier story and also says something for Jesse Walker's character and make-up. This is also a story in the best frontier folklore tradition.

‘The minutes for 1804 report one hundred one white members and two colored on the Livingston Circuit, and in 1805, one hundred sixty white and fifteen colored for Hartford Circuit, and in 1806, three hundred whites....’(27)

In the spring of 1806, William McKendree, the Presiding Elder, and Jesse Walker made a scouting journey into the Illinois country. The two men set out on horseback to look over the territory and to see what could be done for the work of the Church. Between the Kentucky country and the settlements in Illinois there lay a vast uninhabited wilderness. ‘...The two travelers camped in the woods at night, roasted their own meat, the game they killed, and slept on their saddle-blankets, with their saddles for pillows....’(28)

One source spoke of this time and place in the following manner. I think it gives a good picture of the setting and what was happening. It states:

...At the time of the admission of the State, (Illinois) all that portion lying north of Alton and Edwardsville, with slight exceptions, was a wilderness. Occasional explorers, soldiers on their marches to the distant outposts, as well as Indian traders and trappers, had, however, discovered the beauties of the region and given glowing descriptions of its attractions. The project of a canal, which was entertained during the war of 1812, as we have said, had also called attention particularly to this region and led to its purchase of the Indians in 1816, and, as early as 1820 and on, an occasional pioneer had pushed out into the great Northwest. The Methodist Church, also, which, if not as early, has been as zealous and self-denying, as the Jesuit Society in its efforts to Christianize the 'poor Indian,' and to hold the restraints of religion over the pioneer, had early sent out its missionaries, furnished only with horse and saddle-bags, a bible and hymn-book, to establish missions over the region so soon to become the homes of settlers from the East and from the West and South, where Yankees and Hoosiers, Virginians, Kentuckians and 'Buckeyes' were soon to mingle in neighborhood fellowship, in due time to be followed by Irishmen, Germans, Englishmen, Swiss, Norwegians, Swedes and 'contrabands.'(29)

But now, to rejoin Jesse Walker and William McKendree as they made their way into the new Illinois country. Their greatest trouble was in crossing the swollen streams. It had been a time of much rain and many times they were forced to swim their horses across the rapid, fast-flowing currents. They carried their saddle-bags upon their shoulders; this kept their books and most of their clothing dry. Jesse "...found it (the land) so beautiful that he determined at once to come over and possess it, believing that here was to be a great moral conflict, and that he was to be the Joshua to lead on his spiritual Israel to possess it...."(30) At last they reached the settlements and were warmly greeted there. They remained a few weeks and formed a "plan" of appointments and began to set the work of the Church in order. "...After preaching near a place called Turkey Hill, a gentleman said to McKendree: 'I am convinced there is a divine influence in your religion, for though I have

resided here some years, and have done all within my power to gain the confidence and good-will of my neighbors, you have already many more friends here than I have...."(31)

After this first encounter with Illinois Jesse returned to his circuit in Kentucky and preached there until Conference. In 1806 he received his appointment to the Illinois Circuit. "...He hastened home to his family, and arrived there about twelve o'clock. He told them of his new field of labor, and, after some refreshment, commenced packing up for a removal. By ten o'clock the next morning he and his family were on their way to Illinois...."(32) Horses were their only means of travel in those days; they took four of them to carry himself, his wife and youngest daughter who rode together, his oldest daughter, and one to carry his books which consisted of his library and books to sell. "...It was one of the duties of preachers in those days to sell books to those among whom they labored, and it was one of the great means in distributing the truth and helping to build up the cause of Christ...."(33) They brought with them no furniture, not even a bed, but started out for the wilderness with as few worldly goods and possessions as possible. Each one of the family had one change of clothing which they had spun and woven before leaving home.

The Rev. Stephen R. Beggs gives us this description of the journey from the narrative. It reads:

Soon after crossing the Ohio River he found himself and family fully entered into the Indian Territory. At this time a fearful rainstorm met them, and they were rejoiced at being able to take shelter in a deserted wigwam, even drenched with water, besides the discomforts of cold and hunger. They remained here three days, till the storm had subsided, and the streams had fallen a little. They then packed up and plunged again into the wilderness, to encounter much water and much hard labor, to endure hunger and long, wearisome rides, till they reached Turkey Hill, a settlement in Illinois, and their home in the West....(34)

This story of their journey into the wilderness was told to the Rev. Beggs by the oldest daughter of Jesse Walker, Polly, who was now Sister Everett.

Here they stayed with William Scott and his family, who was a "Wholesouled Methodist" and a good friend to them ever after. Even so, "...with all their plainness of apparel, brother Walker and his daughter had to take a severe lecture from sister Scott, because the daughter had worn a dress with short sleeves, or those which came only to the elbows, as was the fashion in those days. They looked so unmethodistic to sister Scott that she could not forbear speaking to them of the sinfulness of such things...."(35)

The Turkey Hill Settlement was in St. Clair County and it was near here that Jesse Walker settled his family in an old log cabin which belonged to Brother Scott. "...It had a plank floor, and a stick chimney with a hole burned out in the back so large that a modern cooking-stove could be thrown through it, as sister Everett expressed it, and the hearth so low down that the edge of the floor made seats for the whole family around the fire; and this was the parsonage and winter quarters of the old hero of Methodism in Illinois...."(36) Jesse, having made some minor repairs, got his family then into the smoky house. They had arranged themselves as well as circumstances would permit and he began his labors with his typical Methodistic zeal and soon many souls were saved and the work of the Church had begun in Illinois.

The first preacher to Illinois had been appointed in 1803, so Jesse was the fourth man to be appointed to this state. On New Year's eve, at the close of 1806, he held a watch-night meeting, probably the first ever held in Illinois. Everyone wondered, "What was a watch-night?" He replied, that he was going to watch for the devil, and he urged them all to turn out for the occasion. The result was a packed house. At this same meeting was also held the first love-feast. According to Beggs, it was a successful one. The next spring, following this watch-night, in April of 1807, was held the first camp meeting in the state of Illinois. This took place near the present town of Edwardsville. One incident that happened can be related here to show the rude means that had to be resorted to from time to time on the frontier. It was:

...One evening there were no lights to be had on the camp-ground, and it was very windy. An old lady volunteered to meet the difficulty. Accordingly she stepped

aside and doffed a white cotton shirt, which she had suspended as a lamp-shade. Then she caused it to be expanded by means of a twing bent in a circular form -- a suggestion of hopes, which had not been thought of in that early day. Then, for the light, she scooped out a large turnip, which she filled with lard. She then twisted a wick of cotton, and rubbing it in the lard set fire to it after it had been suspended inside of the first hooped-skirt and lamp-shade ever used in Illinois. By this light Jesse Walker was able to preach that evening....(37)

According to Stephen Beggs, the preachers present were Walker, Biggs, and Charles Mathew, who alternately preached and exhorted their people. There is a discrepancy here for Field says the preachers present there were Jesse Walker, Charles R. Matheny, and Hosea Rigg. I don't know which man is correct, but both agree Walker was there and that is what is important to me in this paper. Anyway, the meeting was successful and many were converted to Methodism. Another story of the same camp meeting goes as follows: "...A young lady of influence, sister-in-law of the judge of the territory, was so powerfully converted her shouts of joy sent a thrill all over the encampment. This gave a great impetus to the work, and before the meeting adjourned, quoting Jesse Walker's words, 'The last stick of timber was used up'; that is, the last sinner was converted...."(38)

During the summer following this meeting another meeting was held at a place later called Shiloh. This was also where the first Conference ever held in Illinois met later in 1820. Attending this meeting were William McKendree, the presiding elder, Abbott Goddard, and James Gwin, in addition to Jesse Walker. McKendree had been holding a camp meeting over in Missouri. Field tells the story in this way:

...On Friday morning of the Shiloh meeting, the horn had been sounded as a signal to arise, and a second sounding of the horn had called the people to the altar for morning prayers. At this solemn hour a hymn was sung, and while singing, suddenly the people heard the sound of voices in song at a distance. It was McKendree and his accompanying preachers. They rode up, and the singing

continued, amid hearty hand-shaking, tears, and smiles, for some time before the preachers could alight from their horses. The preachers of today know little about the joyous greeting of fellow-preachers in those days when the laborers were so few. The meeting held in the spring, and the one just held across the river in Missouri, awakened a great deal of curiosity and some opposition in the settlements. A certain major raised a company to drive the people from the ground. On Saturday, while James Gwin was preaching, the company rode into the congregation and halted. This produced quite a commotion. Mr. Gwin requested them to leave the ground, and they retired to a spring for a fresh drink of brandy. The major said he had heard of these Methodists before. They disturbed the peace of the neighborhoods by preaching against horse-racing, card-playing, etc., and interfered with their amusements. After a while the company quieted down, and concluded to camp on the ground to prevent the preachers doing any harm. But at three o'clock, while two of the preachers were singing a hymn, an awful sense of Divine power fell upon the congregation, and the people began to run away. Some fell to the ground. Sunday forenoon McKendree preached, and so won the major he became very friendly, and continued thus ever after....(39)

Preceding this same Shiloh camp meeting, Beggs relates to us some other details which Field neglected in his account, for example, the way Jesse Walker selected the site for the proposed meeting. It reads:

...The ground was selected in the following manner: One day while brother Walker was looking for a suitable place for holding the meeting, he came to where a tree had been torn down by lightning. Here, thought he, is a visable display of God's power; and why not select this, as we may have a display of his mighty power for the salvation of souls? and, as if inspiration rested on him for a moment, said, in a very impressive manner, 'Here it shall be.'(40)

Beggs continues his account by giving a description of how preparations were made for a camp meeting and some other details of what happened there too. He states:

...The usual preparations were soon made, log-pens thrown up and covered with clap-boards, conveniences for fifty families. These tents of pens encircled a large space of ground, leaving only passageways out into the open forest....

William McKendree preached, and the work of the Lord commenced with great earnestness and zeal. Those who accompanied the presiding elder were Abbot Goddard, James Quinn, Rev. Killybrew, Thomas Lathley, and Charles Matheny. The meeting continued till Monday; great power was manifest, and many more brought into the kingdom, by the blood of sprinkling. One week after, another was held a few miles south of the present Edwardsville. The first camp-ground was called Shiloh; the second, Bethel, and the third, Eunice. Col. Shelby, of Kentucky, who was a warm personal friend of brother Walker, attended some of these meetings in company with the elder....(41)

“...If Walker’s name appears infrequently as the preacher in the accounts of the camp meetings above described, it is not an indication that he was an obscure participant. Far from it. Though not a great pulpiteer, Walker was a preacher of power and an exhorter of great effectiveness. He was the organizer and general manager of this great campaign which gained for Methodism an impetus which carried on to notable achievements....”(42)

The whole year on the Illinois Circuit was a success. During the year the second church in the state was built; this was also at Shiloh. The first, called Bethel Church, had been built in the Goshen settlement.

During this same year Jesse Walker visited a neighborhood near the Illinois River. At this place there was said to be about sixty or seventy people. He held meetings for three days, read the General Rules of the Church, and invited the people to join the church. The most prominent man among them rose to his feet and said, “I trust we will all unite with you to serve God.”

He then walked forward and gave Mr. Walker his name and shook hands; all of the other people then followed his example. I came across another story of this same time that I thought interesting as a footnote to Illinois history. It states: "...During this year a certain Enoch Moore was converted. It is claimed that he had the distinction of being the first American born in the Illinois country. He became a local preacher and continued to preach until his death in 1848. Moore was a man of prominence and usefulness. He was a member of the first Illinois Constitutional Convention. For many years he was a circuit clerk and probate judge in his home county...."(43) Such was Walker's first year in Illinois. He was not present at the Annual Conference in Chillicothe, Ohio, in September of 1807, but he reported 220 members which was a notable achievement for him out here in the wilderness.(44)

At the same time Jesse Walker was appointed to Illinois in 1806, a John Travis had been appointed to Missouri. This had been the first appointment to that state. In 1807 Walker was sent over to Missouri and a new man was sent to Illinois. But in 1808, according to Field's book, Jesse Walker "...returned to the Illinois side again, to return to Missouri again in 1809. This was to Cape Girardeau Circuit, to which he was returned in 1810. This work he planned out of almost entirely new territory. It had been explored by the preacher on a neighboring circuit the year before, but the country was left for Jesse Walker to work up...."(45) He goes on to describe this period of Walker's career in Missouri, stating:

...He moved his family to the town, which was as unpromising a place as a zealous preacher ever found. It was the boast that the Sabbath had never found its way across the Mississippi. The people were new settlers, who had hardly a way to live themselves, with poor prospects to feed a preacher and his family. While here, Walker held a camp-meeting, a sort of gathering in which he had great confidence. There were five tents on the ground. Sometimes there were as many as two or three hundred people present. There were a few conversions and some additions to the Church. At the sacrament there were eleven communicants. From Cape Girardeau he returned to the Illinois Circuit in 1811....(46)

According to Field, the Illinois District was organized in 1811, and in 1812 Jesse Walker was made presiding elder of this new district. This he then traveled and preached for four full years until 1816 when he was transferred once again to the Missouri District where he remained until 1819. John Scripps, one of Walker's preachers, gives an account of some of Jesse Walker's trips on the Illinois Circuit, which reads:

...He commenced his round at Goshen meeting-house, near Edwardsville, on Friday, April 1, 1815. Closing the meeting at Goshen on Monday, he traveled all the week, filling nightly and daily appointments, till he arrived at the Big Spring meeting-house on Friday, the 8th, where his quarterly-meeting lasted till Monday, April 11th. Another week of daily services brought him to the Davis school-house, near the confluence of the Big Muddy River with the Mississippi. At this place there were some conversions, and a class of sixteen persons was formed. Jacob Whitesides was sent from the company of preachers to form the Okaw Circuit. On Monday, the 18th, Jesse Walker, J. Patterson, and John Scripps set out for the Massac camp-meeting, to be held at the rock and cave on the Ohio River. They traveled through an almost uninhabited country, and almost pathless woods to Thomas Standard's, where a congregation awaited their arrival. The meeting was one of thrilling interest, and lasted until midnight. On Friday, April 22nd, the company arrived at the camp-ground. The meeting commenced at once and proved very profitable, with many conversions. The meeting closed on Monday with a sermon from Brother Walker, and Monday night found him preaching to a large congregation in Proctor's meeting house. Crossing the Wabash near its mouth, they ascended the river in Indiana Territory; crossed the Black, Patoka, and White Rivers to Brother Johnson's, twelve miles for Vincennes. On Friday, April 29th, the quarterly-meeting for Vincennes Circuit was held. It was a time of power. A short ride of six or seven miles was made on Monday, and a meeting held at night at Dr. Messick's; the next day a meeting was held at noon at Harrington's tavern, and at night at

Anthony Griffin's, on Black River. They recrossed the Wabash, and held a quarterly-meeting, on May 6th, at Brother Hannah's, in a block-house. The next appointment was at New Madrid, one hundred and eighty miles away in Missouri, which our travelers reached so as to commence promptly on May 13th. From thence they rode sixty miles to Cape Girardeau, where the quarterly-meeting commenced on May 20th. At both these appointments, and at nearly all others through the summer, camp-meetings were held. This was needful, from the fact that no house in the country could hold Jesse Walker's congregations that, on account of his popularity, came ten and twenty miles from all directions....(47)

This account gives one an idea of the kind of pace these circuit riders had to keep. They had to be tough and rugged individuals who could endure this type of travel and hardship. Field goes on to state that Jesse Walker "...spent three months in this round without seeing his family. The faithful 'Sukey,' as he familiarly styled her, took care of the home in his absence. The roads he traveled were narrow, winding horse-paths, with miles without any path at all. Rains poured, and streams were crossed by swimming the horses. The stopping-places were log huts, which served as meeting-house, kitchen, and bedroom; the fare, corn-bread, fried bacon, and herb-tea...."(48)

Jesse Walker made this same round in one of the severest winters of that time. Again, according to Field's account, "...The toils and pains and privations of that journey are on record, but the reader can imagine them...Take the travels of the April round, and put them into a winter of sleet and ice and half-frozen streams, and we can see, without narrating it, some of the beauties of the early itinerancy. And but for these very labors, Illinois would have gone to barbarism...."(49) Scripps' accounts of these times and conditions is interesting to pursue at some greater length. On the conditions of the horses, he says, "...Our horses fared worse, in muddy pens, or tied up to saplings, or corners of the cabin, regaled with the refuse of the winter's fodder, sometimes...with seed corn purchased in Kentucky at a dollar per bushel, and brought in small quantities, according to the circumstances of the purchaser, one

hundred miles or over, at some expense and trouble....''(50)  
On their sleeping conditions, he states:

...Our lodgings were on beds of various qualities, generally feather beds, but not infrequently fodder, chaff, shucks, straw, and sometimes only deerskins; but always the best the house afforded, either spread on the rough puncheon floor, before the fire (From which we must rise early to make room for breakfast operations; or on a patched up platform attached to the wall, which not unfrequently would fall down, sometimes in the night, with its triplicate burden of three in a bed. Such incidents would occasion a little mirth among us, but we would soon fix up and be asleep again. Now, I would here remark, that many of these privations could have been avoided by keeping a more direct course from one quarterly meeting to another, and selecting, with a view to personal comfort, our lodging places. But Brother Walker sought not personal comfort so much as the good of souls, and he sought the most destitute in their most retired recesses, and in their earliest settlements....(51)

He ends this narration with these thoughts about those times:

These circumstances of the early pioneers were caused by the recentness of their removal to a new country in its crudest state, before they had time, by industry, to draw upon its resources by improvements and the cultivation of the soil. But the flexible mind of man can accommodate itself, and become adapted to almost any circumstances; and these dear people, in the midst of their privations, were contended and even happy, and seldom failed to instill the same feeling into the bosoms of their way-worn guests by their artless civilities, homely apologies, cheerful welcomes, and open hospitalities; but, above all, their fervent piety. These have a hundred times won upon my warmest sensibilities and given me a better relish for the coarssets fare than the richest viands, when these were wanting....(52)

At the conference in the Fall of 1814 John Scripps and John

C. Harbison, who was a lawyer, were received on trial. They had been the second and third preachers who were raised up in Missouri. J. Nowlen and J. Whitesides were the first two raised up from Illinois. At this point Jesse Walker was relieved of half his duties with the division of his extensive field of labor into two districts. Brother Walker got the eastern half which included the four circuits of Illinois and the two circuits of Vincennes and Patoka, in Indiana, which retained the name of Illinois District. Walker and Scripps did extensive religious work in this region of Illinois and Indiana and even broadened it. In this western work, it should be noted, the towns were almost always avoided by the preachers because they felt there had been too much sin and dissipation for them to do much good there; Vincennes and Cape Girardeau were likely the only exceptions to this. It was also about this time that Evansville was taken into the regular work and a class was formed there. In Columbia, another town on the Patoka, a class of some ten or so members was formed, but with some difficulty. Scripps relates:

...After a hard day's travel of thirty miles, in the depth of winter, leading my horse, lamed with a founder, through snow knee deep, and an uninhabited part of my circuit, having started before day and consequently, without my breakfast, in order to accomplish my day's journal, I found myself, about 8 o'clock at night (having long traveled without any road or guide but the moon) in the vicinity of a large farm, and with some difficulty wended my way around the fence, amid the obstacles of accumulated snow, fallen trees and tangled brushwood, to near the house, where I called and inquired the way ahead. I was told it was too intricate for a stranger to find. I was most cordially invited to stay, accompanied with a promise of the best of the house afforded. The reflection from a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth, together with the invitation, was too tempting for a poor, weary, benighted, half-frozen pilgrim to refuse. My host and hostess were very sociable, and sympathized with my sufferings. On my first admission, the coffee pot was put on the fire, and the Dutch oven, replenished with biscuits, was enveloped with coals to bake them, when,

unfortunately for me, my host's sagacity detected my occupation and he and the 'gude wife' both became the most taciturn mortals I ever tried to converse with. A table was soon set in a dark corner, and some frozen hoe-cake and salted meat set on it, to which the Methodist preacher was invited for his supper. He nibbled and tasted, and nibbled and tasted, and endeavored (merely for the sake of appearances) to eat, but finding one unmunchable, and the other unpalatable, he gave it over to despair, and again ensconced himself by the fire. By this time the supper, commenced for the stranger, was ready; a lamp was lighted, a table spread, and the good old couple sat down; and holding a very animated conversation, and exhibiting a great many courtesies to one another, ate heartily. Now the sensation of hunger I was always but little affected with, and a day's abstinence could scarcely at any time promote it, and less so at this time; for, seated by a good fire, I was perfectly comfortable, and much amused, both at my own situation and the demeanor of my entertainers. I was led into a train of relections that set me to moralizing, which ended in making an experiment on the good people, by dunning them into sociability with me. My efforts, for a long time, were responded to in monosyllables, but I persevered till the charm was broken, and a very interesting interchange of thoughts on religious topics beguiled the hours till midnight. But he really shed tears in the morning when he found that he could not prevail on me to stay and partake of an excellent breakfast they had commenced preparing before day for me. He went with me half a mile through his plantation letting down his fences for me, to avoid some difficult road on the outside way. I could not get away till I promised to visit him again, which was in August, when hearing of his case, I went to redeem my promise. I found him and his wife both prostrate with the cold plague; I found them both, though, happy in the Lord. He informed me that, in consequence of the disease being reputed contagious, not a single individual had visited him during the past two weeks of his affliction, not even the pastor of his own Church; 'and now' continued he, 'I have one request to make, and

remember it is the request of a dying man. It is (as you seem not to be afraid of the infection) that you will preach to my family (he had nine children) tonight, that I may hear one more sermon before I die.' I consented, and left him, it being yet early in the afternoon. I went round the neighborhood and eventually prevailed on five Methodists, who went with me at night. About the middle of the sermon he and his wife broke out in ecstacies and praise. Toward the middle of my discourse he sprang from his bed, from which he had not risen for the last three days (a remarkably tall, athletic old man, reduced to the merest skeleton, exhibiting a most unearthly appearance); he rushed at me with exclamations of rapture and praise, and embraced me crying out, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant die in peace.' He was carried exhausted, to bed, the next day he was a corpse, and his wife in a few days afterward also died and in a few weeks their elder children were taken into the pale of the Methodist Church.(53)

It seems that in this area there were a heavy number of immersionists and people of a fundamentalist persuasion who were very much opposed to the entrance of Methodism into their confines. Little by little, according to Scripps' narrative, this was overcome.

Scripps was appointed for the year 1815-1816 to the Illinois Circuit. Brothers Walker and Thompson were also reappointed in 1815 to their respective districts. W. R. Jones, a recent professor of religion, was appointed as Scripps' colleague. Rev. J. Nowlen, who had been on the Okaw Circuit, retired from the work of the Lord. As a result Scripps' Circuit was enlarged from three weeks to six weeks. At about this time the most northern point of population in southern Illinois was Alton, four miles above the mouth of the Missouri River. Scripps is to have preached the first sermon there. His Circuit plan continued easterly down the American Bottom to Kaskaskia in Randolph County. Kaskaskia, the seat of government, had seen little preaching up to this time. Scripps had an appointment there on April 14th and he was much annoyed with the French Catholics, who made a great deal of noise and disturbance during his ceremony. The French kept their chapel bell ringing

and its noise and clattering reverberations filled the room; finally, Governor Edwards went out and secured silence. Through the year he had quietness, and an attentive, feeling congregation, but he made no effort to raise a class there. Scripps spread his work through-out this region of Illinois; these bounds now take in Alton Station, Edwardsville, Belleville, Lebanon, Waterloo, and "the American Bottom." Three new Methodist meeting houses were built in the Circuit. In the French villages there were two or three Catholic chapels. In addition to these villages there were but four towns, which were, Illinoistown, Harrisonville, Kaskaskia, and Shawneetown. From this you can see that Scripps was a worthy son of Jesse Walker in the spreading of the Gospel.

It has been noted that Jesse Walker was not an eloquent preacher, but yet he won many souls to Christ. He was a living testimony of the Sacrificial Christ and a rugged old veteran of the Cross. It seemed men could not resist his common appeal. This story, related by Scripps, is a case in point. It goes this way:

...After closing a very fatiguing and disagreeable day's ride, on the 8th of February (1816), they put up at the Ohio Saline tavern, a center of resort for all the young bucks, and other more exceptional characters, of a dissolute community. After supper they were favored with a separate room and a cheerful fire. So rare was there an opportunity to read in comfort that they took up 'Wesley's Notes' and settled down for a profitable evening. But they were scarcely settled before a fiddle in an adjoining room struck up a solemn tune of sacred music, followed by livelier and still more lively airs, hurrying onward to catches, jigs, glees and still more exceptionable music, with an accompaniment, at first, of suppressed titters, but rising with the music to loudest bursts of uproariousness. Being satisfied that there were peepers, anxious to witness the effect of the unhallowed sounds on the preachers, Scripps urged Walker, in vain, not to seem to notice the unseemly conduct in the next room. Walker either could not or would not restrain his feelings. He laid aside his book and appeared to engage

in silent and devout meditation. Presently the landlord came into their room. Walker asked him to request these merry gentlemen to suspend their mirth for a few minutes and join in worship before they retired to sleep. The large company of merrymakers accepted the invitation and behaved with respect. Walker read and paraphrased a chapter, gave out and sang a hymn, in which many of the company joined; then, in a most fervent prayer, acknowledged the mercies of the day and implored pardons of all offenses, and supplicated the Divine protection throughout the night. Some of them remained after the services, in interesting and profitable conversation, till late bed time, and no further discordant sounds annoyed the preachers....(54)

This tour completed Jesse Walker's round of his district. He performed another on his way to General Conference and another upon his return. After this round, he also held three camp meetings within three successive weeks throughout the bounds of the Illinois Circuit. At these meetings many converts were made and many were united with the Church. At the Missouri Conference of 1816 Jesse Walker was transferred to the Missouri district after having served the Illinois district for four years. In this time the membership of the district increased from 1422 to 2224. From 1815 to 1820 the population of the Missouri Territory increased by 35,000. There was at this time a heavy migration westward. Most of these people had come to secure land, build homes and improve the country. With them they brought the trappings of civilization: churches, schools, books, libraries, newspapers, and social fellowship. (55)

In 1807 the sons of Daniel Boone, the famous old scout and Indian fighter from Kaintuck, "The dark and bloody ground," Nathan and Daniel M., had made their way to Howard County to manufacture salt; they brought back a good report of the upper country. This country then became known as the Booneslick Country; this is the country west of Cedar River and Callaway County. The Booneslick Road was opened and many settlers began to move westward quickly. By 1819, when Walker's terms on the Missouri District ended, the country

west of Cote-sans-sein had about 800 families. John Scripps returned to Missouri with Walker when Walker was appointed Presiding Elder of the Missouri District in 1816. Scripps' journal again informs us of Walker's doings during the three years on the Missouri District, 1816-1819. This district reached from Pike County up the Mississippi to the northeastern quarter of Arkansas. This area takes in half the state of Missouri and a quarter of the state of Arkansas.

On July 8, 1817, Scripps got a letter, dated June 20th, from Jesse Walker, who was then at Spring River, Arkansas, over three hundred miles away, requesting him to meet Walker at Cape Girardeau on Saturday, the 12th. This distance was one hundred and thirty miles away over narrow and mountainous paths. It would have been impossible to reach him on horseback, so Scripps found a canoe and began immediately to descend the Meramec River which in turn ran to the Mississippi River. This is how Scripps recalled the experience:

...One of the darkest nights I ever witnessed soon inclosed me in impenetrable gloom, till about eleven o'clock, when, arriving within six or eight miles of the Mississippi, whose high waters were averting the current of the Meramec. I seemed suddenly transported into a scene of enchantment. The luxuriant foliage of almost impervious brushwood, entangled with vines, and thickly studded with large forest trees from either side, throwing their giant arms across, and intermingling with each other high overhead, embowering the narrow channel, all rendered indistinctly visible only by the luminous gyrations of inconceivable millions of the fire-fly, by whose reflections on the waters beneath, reflecting as below in proportion of their heights above, I seemed borne in my little vessel high in the air, amid upper nether and surrounding luminous sparks, through the appearance of what seemed a tunnel. Indeed, the scene was so unique, and so inspirative of indescribable feelings, that I could not omit describing it in narrating the journey. About one o'clock, I landed, struck up a fire and encamped for the residue of the night on the first island in the Mississippi below the mouth of the

Meramec. On Saturday morning, about daybreak, I arrived on the camp ground in Cape Girardeau....(56)

When he arrived he found that he had been called to complete a committee for the trial of a preacher, since he was the only other preacher in the whole Missouri District. It turned out that the charge was not too serious and only resulted in the suspension of the preacher until the next Conference. This was the first such trial of an itinerant preacher in the Illinois and Missouri Area, which reflects much credit on the character of these pioneer preachers.

This meeting Scripps found in progress at Cape Girardeau proved to be very successful. Jesse Walker and John Scripps then moved northward to hold a camp meeting on the Missouri River. They arrived on Friday, July 18th, after having traveled near 180 miles; here they joined John Shrader, who was the preacher in charge of the Missouri Circuit. Their labors for God were much blessed with some of the services continuing all night amidst songs of praise and shouts of victory. It was in this manner that these men did the work of the Lord. But before we leave John Scripps to follow the career of Jesse Walker let us see briefly what happened to Scripps. He was appointed for the year 1818-1819 to the Cape Girardeau and St. Francis Circuits; the Reverend John McFarland was appointed as his colleague. These two men labored together in great harmony, but with some difficulty because their job was so great. Scripps remained active in the work of the Church and was shortly "well married" to Agnes Corrie from Corrieville, near Mt. Carmel. For many years he ran a newspaper at Rushville, Illinois. It might be noted that he was a member of the Scripps family which included three brothers and a sister who were to be famous in the newspaper business world as the organizers and beginners of the Scripps-McRae and Scripps-Howard newspaper chains.

Here we come to the planting of the Methodist Church banner in the city of St. Louis. The work that Jesse Walker did in this was no greater than that which he had performed in many another place. It is just that this receives more attention because of its greater consequences. The Missouri Conference met at McKendree Chapel in Missouri in 1819. By this time

Jesse had completed seven years as Presiding Elder and he now received an appointment as simply, a "missionary." This meant he was free to roam where he would and his work to "break up new ground" and look for new fields of labor for the Lord. The need for this service came from the fact that all preachers were over-worked and kept getting into new territories. This way a preacher could tend his own flock in his own circuit and leave men like Jesse Walker to be missionaries to the virgin areas and conquer for the Lord the souls who happened to be there. It was at this point that Jesse thought the gospel should be carried into St. Louis. John Scripps, at one time, had preached there, but no one had been there since. So, Brother Walker formed his plans at Conference and engaged two young and zealous preachers to join him in the attempt to gain a foothold for God and the Methodist Church in St. Louis. The city at this time was settled, as you probably know, by French and this meant that the Catholic religion was well established there. It is also said that sin and vice of every kind held sway and led the people there. It was this that Jesse Walker wanted to attack. The two young preachers met Jesse as planned and they prepared to enter this Capital City of the West.

One of the most historic cities of the United States is St. Louis which has flown three flags: French, Spanish, and American. For many years it was an outpost of French and American civilization. Auguste Chouteau, in 1764, established a fur trading post at this place. That same year, his stepfather, Pierre Laclede Liguests formed a settlement, called Laclede Village, which was soon changed to St. Louis in honor of Louis XIV of France. France had secretly ceded the Louisiana Territory, as it was called, to Spain in 1762, but they didn't take possession until 1770. In spite of this it remained a French town. You can still find evidences of this French tradition there today. In 1800 the French recovered the Louisiana Territory by treaty and St. Louis was returned to its previous owners. In 1803 the city passed along with the territory into American hands. On that April day in 1803 three flags, French, Spanish, and American, floated over the city of St. Louis.

St. Louis had early become a leading fur trading center; for many years it had the largest fur market in the whole United

States. This fur trade brought many a rough and ready character to St. Louis. The city also became a center for intrigue between the Spanish, French, English, Americans, and Indians. All of these groups were vying for control of the fur trade and the territory. St. Louis was also a river town and everyone has heard of the reputation of river towns. This was the northern terminus for river shipping. St. Louis, called the "Gateway to the West," was the jumping-off place for many western fur trappers and traders, adventurers and glory-seekers, and settlers in general. Jesse Walker is said to have characterized the place as "the very fountain head of devilism." Joseph Charles, Editor of the **Missouri Gazette**, on October 20, 1819, said, in summarization, the past decade in St. Louis was one marked by violence, persecution, arrogance, and unprincipled ambitions. The **Missouri Gazette** of September 13, 1820, said: "...During a considerable time, from the commencement of this paper in 1808, to the present time, the most violent party spirit has raged in the town of St. Louis. The most violent measures have been resorted to by an overbearing, aristocratic faction. Shooting, caning and every kind of personal injury and abuse have been attempted...."(57)

With the foregoing material as an historical background let us return to the exploits of Jesse Walker. When he and his two friends reached St. Louis they found the Territorial Legislature in session and every public place full. When it was learned who they were by the townspeople they were ridiculed and cursed. They could find no openings for lodging or for meeting places. Feeling hindered at every turn they held a consultation in the town square. The two young preachers thought that if the Lord had work for them to do He would open a door to them, but it didn't appear there was work for them there so they rode off and left Jesse sitting along on his horse in the square. This had the effect of leaving Jesse very despondent and down; he turned his horse south and rode eighteen miles in silence praying for God's direction. After some time, according to Field's version, he broke into the following soliloquy: "Was I ever defeated before? Never! Did ever any one trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and get confounded? No! And by the grace of God I will go back and take St. Louis!" He then turned his horse and retraced his steps back to the city. Finally, with some

trouble, he found lodging in a Tavern where he paid the highest prices for everything. The next day he set out to look over the city. He heard of a carpenter who had been a Methodist and looked him up; the carpenter took him aside and stated to him in private, "I was a Methodist once, before I came here; but finding no brethren in St. Louis, I never made myself known, and do not now consider myself a member, and do not wish this to become known, lest it injure my business." According, again, to Field, Brother Walker gave up all such broken reeds.(58)

As Jesse Walker made his way around town he met some of the legislators who knew him. They asked such things as, "Why, Father Walker, what has brought you here?", and he would respond, "I have come to take St. Louis." These people admired his bravado and zeal, but also felt that he had undertaken a very difficult and useless task. Upon meeting this response of apathy and pessimism he would answer, "I have come to take St. Louis, and by the help of the Lord I will do it." Finally, after much agony, he found a place to preach occupied by a few so-called "Hardshell Baptists." He had a small attendance at first, but the second time interest rose extremely and the meeting place was taken from him. Next, he found a large, unfurnished boarding house which he was able to rent for ten dollars a month. He found some discarded benches from the Court House, borrowed some tools, and fixed and installed them in the largest room of the boarding house. This was to be the place of worship. It was here that he began preaching, twice on Sundays, and quite frequently on week nights. He also, at the same time, started a school for the children of the poor. He took care of his own house to keep expenses down and, soon thereafter, returned home to Illinois for his provisions and bedding and other needs. Soon the chapel and school were both filled. Some of the better citizens then decided that they wanted to send their children to his school. To take care of this added enrollment Jesse was forced to hire a young man to assist him in the teaching duties. Signs of revival began to come about; the first subjects being blacks and poor whites. Finally, he began to draw the rich and affluent and they too were converted.(59)

Robert D. Sutton, who was one of Jesse's students, left this recollection:

The school was opened by singing a verse of 'Children of the Heavenly King', then a short prayer. Father Walker examined each scholar to see how much they knew in letters. He found five who did not know their A B C's; the other five could read a little. Father Walker then gave to each boy who could read one who could not, thus forming them into classes, one teaching the other his A B C's. While they were thus engaged Father Walker called first one and then another of those who could read and gave to each of them a short lesson of instruction and advice on religious subjects. This course was pursued for one and one half hours, when Father Walker informed them that the school must close for the present. But it would open again on next Sunday morning, and he invited them all to come again and bring as many new scholars as they could along with them. He made them a short address on religious subjects, sang a verse of 'Jesus My All to Heaven Has Gone.' Then a short prayer and we were dismissed with the benediction....(60)

This advertisement appeared in the **St. Louis Republican** of November 27, 1822. It illustrates Jesse Walker's activities in trying to educate the youth of St. Louis. It reads:

#### “ENGLISH SCHOOL

J. Walker wishes to inform the citizens of St. Louis that he has opened an English School in the house where he taught last summer, South Third St., on the following terms:  
Spelling and Reading per month \$1.00  
Writing, Arithmetic and English Grammar per month \$1.33

A night school will open at the same place on moderate terms. Testimonials of the ability of the teacher employed can be shown to those who apply.

ECOLE ANGLAISE  
(Advertisement repeated in French)''(61)

Jesse was just beginning to make some progress and he lost his meeting place again, since the owner died and the property passed into different hands. Defeat had struck again, but Brother Walker was not to be defeated. He decided to go ahead and build a new chapel. He got lumber from a timber offered to him by a citizen; this was located across the Mississippi River. This same man paid for ferrying the workmen over to cut the timber. Very soon a new building was erected and the ladies agreed to furnish it. He was then given the Bible and pews from a deserted Episcopal Church. Friends helped him to meet his agreements and contracts. Soon the chapel was opened and this was a fresh revival for him and the God he served. At the end of the first year in St. Louis he was able to report a church, a school, and about seventy new members. The next year he was appointed as a regular pastor there. The church grew so rapidly that the Missouri Conference was held there in 1822.

Another story of Walker's Missouri doings comes to us, by way of Field again, which says, in his wanderings Jesse encountered a man by the name of Williams S. Tee, who was a man who held large holdings in the Potosi lead region. It is said he was a man of noble and generous impulses, but also rather profane and evil. In spite of this though this man formed an attachment for the pioneer preacher. He admired his christian zeal and missionary spirit. Jesse was resolved to visit the Potosi area where, it was said, Satan held sway. He had sent an appointment to the place and the miners said that if he came there they would "regulate" him. He answered that it was his Master's will that he come and, By Jove, he was coming. Tee replied, "Well, you are a great fool to think you can do those reprobates any good; but if you want to try you shall have a chance. Don't be afraid; I shall be there, and they shall hear

the gospel once in their lives at any rate.''(62)

The day came to leave and Jesse Walker, with his rifle on his shoulder, set out on horseback for Potosi. He found, upon arriving, assembled there as rowdy a group of scoundrels as had ever congregated in one place, all armed as Missouri and Arkansas men can arm themselves. William S. Tee was also there with a large party of his own men when Jesse rode up. Before the proceedings commenced, Tee got up on a stump, and stated:

Mr. Walker is a minister; I do not know anything about his religion. I know he is a brave man, and a clever fellow; and though he was a great fool to think his religion could do you any good, yet he wants to preach, and he shall do so, and you must hear him. And now, the first man that interrupts him goes from this place a dead man...Then turning to the preacher, he said: Walker, now give them hell-fire and damnation, for they deserve it....(63)

Jesse sat his rifle down and mounted the stump, sang and prayed, and preached with great power thinking God must have made these wicked men his protection and felt the strength of God within himself. As a result of this dramatic episode a revival broke out right then and there and a great reformation followed which lasted, some say, right down to this present day.

Many writers have tried to describe the Reverend Jesse Walker as he must have looked in those days; I gave one description early in this account. I would now like to share with you another, as given by Bishop Morris, it reads:

Let the reader suppose a man about five feet six inches high, of rather slender form, with a sallow complexion, light hair, small blue eyes, prominent cheek bones, and pleasant countenance, dressed in drab-colored clothes, made in the plain style peculiar to the early Methodist preachers, his neck secured with a white cravat, and his head covered with a light-colored beaver, nearly as large as a ladies' parasol, and they will see

Jesse Walker as if spread out on canvas before them....(64)

The following statement is from the famous Peter Cartwright. This will illustrate an incident that happened frequently when backwoods preachers from up here in Illinois and Missouri went down into the more civil and cultured areas of Kentucky and Tennessee. He stated:

...I think it was in the fall of 1819 our beloved old Brother Walker came over to our Tennessee Conference, which sat at Nashville, to see us. But O how weather-beaten and war-worn was he, almost, if not altogether, without decent apparel to appear among us! We soon made a collection, and had him a decent suit of clothes to put on; and never shall I forget the blushing modesty and thankfulness with which he accepted that suit....(65)

Bishop Morris further stated about Jesse Walker, the following:

...As to his mental endowments he was without education, except the elementary branches of English imperfectly acquired. But favored with a good share of common sense, cultivated by some reading, but much more by practical intercourse with society, and enriched with a vast fund of incidents peculiar to a frontier life, which he communicated with much ease and force, his conversational talent, his tact in narrative, his spicy manner, and almost endless variety of religious anecdotes, rendered him an object of attraction in social life. Unaccustomed to expressing his thoughts on paper, he kept his journal in his mind, by which means his memory, naturally retentive, was much strengthened, and his resources for the entertainment of his friends increased. He introduced himself among strangers with much facility, and so soon as they became acquainted with him, his social habits, good temper, unaffected simplicity, and great ease of manners for a backwoodsman, made them fast friends. As a pulpit orator he was not

above mediocrity, if up to it; but his zeal was ardent, his moral courage firm, his piety exemplary, and his perseverance in whatever he undertook was undaunted. Consequently, by the blessing of God upon his labors, he was enabled in the third of a century to accomplish untold good....(66)

These statements, I think, are fitting tributes to this "Daniel Boone of Methodism." As indicated from the quotes above he was a remarkable and outstanding man of God. He seemed to be loved and respected by almost everyone who came in contact with him. It seems to me that Jesse Walker was a true example of what a Christian gentleman should be.

William Beauchamp, an eloquent preacher too, succeeded Jesse Walker in the St. Louis church in October of 1822. Next came a man by the name of Andrew Monroe, who said: "The church was a frame building, 28 x 30 feet. The Parsonage was one room in Sister Collard's house, which served as kitchen, dining room, bedroom and parlor...."(67) In 1830 the congregation moved to a new location at the northwest corner of Fourth and Washington Streets. For this property John O'Fallon gave the lot and \$500.00 in cash. In 1853 the same property was sold for \$50,000.00. Some mark-up and profit! The Centenary Methodist Church in St. Louis is the direct lineal descendant of Jesse Walker's first class in that city. Thanks to Jesse the first Methodist Church in St. Louis was completed and occupied at the first session of the conference there. But Brother Walker could not stand still on conquered soil; he had to be moving on to new territory again. This brought to a close his labors in the great state of Missouri. His "frontier methods" were no longer needed there. He turned over the reins to others who could more effectively work with the ever-increasing affluent people who were settling there. He was looking to greener pastures.

Walker's services in Missouri ended with St. Louis, but I would like to add some further tributes to this great man of God. Joel Spence in the **Missouri Historical Society Review** said:

"Missouri has had and has now illustrious and great men, but none has done more probably for the uplifting and for the

welfare of the great commonwealth of Missouri than Jesse Walker. He occupied a large place in the affections and confidence of the people. He gave his all, mind, life, energy for the souls of men. He truly gave his life for others that they might live...."(68) Woodward in his book, **The Annals of Methodism in Missouri**, says:

Of the more than one thousand names on the roll of the Methodist preachers in Missouri, none shines with a steadier ray than his (Walker's). He was our morning star, a bright and shining light, that ushered in the reign of the Gospel Light and religious liberty on the west side of the Mississippi River. No man did so much for Methodism here during the first decade of history as he. No man ever performed thirty-two years of more constant labor on the frontier where greater sacrifices were required, or more hardships were endured than he....(69)

And the Methodist historian, McAnally, said:

"Jesse Walker was in many respects a noteworthy character and must, by the simple force of his own great deeds, fill a space incomparably larger than can be accorded to any other man in the eye of the candid history of early Methodism in Missouri...."(70)

In 1823 Jesse Walker's appointment was as, "Missionary to the Missouri Conference, whose attention is particularly directed to the Indians in the bounds of said Conference."(71) This stated appointment opened up a whole new area and era to our pioneer preacher. It was to put him in or near a connection with Chicago, the great city by the lake. It was he too who would later plant the banner of Methodism in Chicago, but I'm getting ahead of myself in this narration. A few years before this, it is said, a John Stewart, a black man, had gone among the Wyandotte Indians in northern Ohio and had had a great deal of success in converting these Indians to Christ and Christianity. This event seemed to have had the effect of making the Church nearly everywhere want to do something for these native peoples. At that time the country from Peoria to the far north was filled by roving and wandering groups of

Indians. Jesse had no real idea as to where to begin, but he made up his mind to begin somewhere and so he did.

At the Conference of 1823, Jesse had made known to John Scripps his idea of going up the Illinois River to the Pottawatomie Indians, who were encamped near the present site of Peoria. At the close of this conference Scripps stuck around a few days to help his old friend, Jesse, get outfitted and ready for this new endeavor. They tried to find, at first, a light carriage, but failed. Next, they rigged up a vehicle by using that old "Yankee ingenuity" and substituting a pair of old wagon wheels to make a two-wheeled cart. Onto this contraption Jesse loaded his supplies and prepared to start out on another new, and last, adventure. He and John Scripps said their good-byes and each turned his own way, Scripps south to Arkansas, and Walker north to Indian country.

He then set out to find the Indians, who were usually camped between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, but he learned that the whole tribe was across the great river, The Father of Waters, in Iowa on a hunting expedition. This next point I find remarkable and characteristic of Jesse Walker's life; he resolved to hunt them down and find them, so as to minister to their spiritual needs. Amazing! So, Jesse secured a sack of corn and an interpreter and set out after his red brothers. He proceeded to cross the Mississippi River in a canoe, while swimming his horse alongside. After a strenuous journey they finally reached one of the Indian camps. When they rode up, an Indian, who knew the interpreter, asked: "Who is with you? A Quaker?" "No." "A minister?" "Yes." They all seemed to be rather pleased with the situation and the chief, who was a tall, rather dignified person, came up to them and gave them a warm welcome. Whereupon they also cared for their horses and their personal needs. They were cheerfully entertained. The chief, when he learned Jesse wanted to talk to them, sent out word to the other tribes in the area to gather for a council. This was held that same evening.(72)

The following is an account of what transpired at that council, according to Field. It reads:

...When the company who came were seated, the wife of the chief took a bowl of meat and broth of opossum and

venison, and passed it first to her husband, and then to the missionary, and after to the company, serving the oldest first. Then the pipe of peace was passed, from which all in turn took a whiff. This done, the chief stuck the blade of his hatchet into the ground, and inquired what was the object of the meeting. Jesse Walker made known his mission; spoke of the Bible, and handed the book to the chief. Then the chief rose, and made answer: 'The white children's Father has given them a book, and they will do well to mind what it tells them'. But he doubted whether it was intended for his red children. However, as some of their older men were absent, they could not then decide the matter. In a few days they would hold a larger council, and give him an answer. The result of the second council was leave to establish a mission school.

Having settled this matter, our missionary returned to his home to make preparation for his new work. He had not gone a day's journey before a messenger came galloping after him with the message from the chiefs, telling him to be sure to come back in the spring....(73)

At the Conference of 1823 Jesse Walker was elected as one of the delegates of the Missouri Conference to the General Conference which that year sat in Baltimore, Maryland. Along with Thomas A. Morris, who later became a bishop and who also was the delegate from the Kentucky Conference, Jesse rode on horseback from out here in the West to Baltimore. This trip took about two or three months of that summer of 1824. When Jesse visited Washington, D.C., he visited the Secretary of War and got permission from him to open his Indian mission. It seems also likely that it was at this time the government promised to pay two-thirds of the expense of the mission school on which Salem Mission depended so much, however, this money was never paid. Because of the amount of time spent in traveling to and from the General Conference, nothing much was done about it until after conference.

At the Conference of 1824 Jesse Walker was continued as a missionary to the Indians. He right away opened a school at Fort Clark, which is now where Peoria stands, and this school

continued through the winter. In school he had "six Indian children, whose progress was extremely flattering for so short a period." Discovering that most of the Pottawatomies were settled farther north toward Chicago, he proceeded in the spring of 1825 with five white families, to the mouth of the Fox River where he held a pow-wow with five chiefs of the tribe. Missionaries, as soon as it was possible to do so, began to build cabins for the living quarters of the families. These were to be the first homes on what is today the site of Ottawa, Illinois.

During the time Walker was in Peoria, in the spring of 1825, he formed the first class there. He was not satisfied with the location of his mission, so that spring he took a trip with a man by the name of John Hamlin, whose wife was a Methodist, to Chicago in a Mackinaw boat. They had a crew of six besides themselves; they moved up the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers. According to Hamlin, "Walker had prayers with us night and morning; and, as we laid by early every afternoon, the old pioneer would line hymn after hymn, and he and the boys made the woods ring with the old Methodist hymns." (74) As a footnote to history, this was the first appearance of a Methodist minister into Northern Illinois; since then the reverberations of Methodist songs have not died out in the confines of the Rock River Conference. It was probably on this trip of exploration that Jesse decided to remove his mission from where it was up to Ottawa. Then he discovered that Ottawa was not the best location either. He learned that the body of Indians was farther north and that he was not on Indian lands after-all. After having already built their cabins, he discovered their mistake. This troubled him a great deal; he went off alone, despondent, to pray and seek advice from his God. Field tells us what occurred:

...While at prayer, he was disturbed by the sound of footsteps, and, looking up, he saw a nobly-formed Indian standing near, with a smile of welcome on his face. This Shabbonee, the friend of the white man. The chief introduced himself with the expression, 'Me Shabbonee,' at the same time giving Brother Walker a warm shake of the hand. Jesse Walker could speak no Indian, and Shabbonee little English; so there was little conversation,



**Shabbona Monument --** This marker in Evergreen Cemetery in Morris, Illinois is a tribute to the white man's friend as he was known. He was the grandnephew of Pontiac and he married Spotka, the daughter of a Potawatomi Chief. Shabbona became chief when his father-in-law died. Shabbona died on July 17, 1859, at 84 years of age.



**Shabbona**



**Spotka**



but enough to give Walker to understand that he had found a friend. Shabbonee soon disappeared. He went to his own camp, about a mile distant, from which he soon returned, bearing on his shoulder a quarter of vension and a wild turkey. He was accompanied by a half-breed who became interpreter. The next day, under the guidance of Shabbonee and Furkee (or Furque), the missionary explored the country up the east side of Fox River until he came to a beautiful spot twenty miles above the mouth of the river, where was a spring in a beautiful grove. Here Jesse Walker drove his stakes, and established Salem Mission, the first Methodist appointment in the bounds of the Rock River Conference. This location was on Section 15, Township 35, Range 5, now in the town of Mission, in La Salle County....(75)

From looking at the records and studying Walker's reports we learn that he often spoke of chiefs, but didn't name them or establish who they were. This type of thing, later historians find frustrating, but we must try to overcome it. From various other writings though we learn Shabbonee, Billy Caldwell, or the Sanganash, Alexander Robinson, and Waubansee, a rather warlike chief, were all Indians who aided and helped Jesse Walker; they were also his friends. Jesse described his location in a report given in October of 1825, as follows: "The place is about one hundred miles above Fort Clark, about twenty miles north of the Illinois River, between it and Fox River. The soil is very good, timber plenty, and the spot well watered."(76) This place he named Salem and that name was attached to the mission in the appointments of 1827.

I think that the following letters can relate better than I can this phase of Jesse Walker's missionary activities among the Indians in this new territory. The original letters, it seems, have been lost, but they have been preserved for us in secondary form. It is from these that I quote.

To the Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Society of the M. E. C.

POTAWATOME MISSION  
St. Louis, Oct. 25, 1825

Rev. Sir--In compliance with the instructions I

received from Bishop Roberts, I transmit to you information relative to a mission among the Indians, to which I was appointed by Bishop McKendree, superintendent of the Missouri conference in 1823.

In the spring of 1824 I opened a communication with the Potawatome Indians, and found that they were willing to receive a mission among them; but my call to the general conference prevented me from holding a satisfactory council with them that year. Being re-appointed in the next autumn, 1824, by Bishop Roberts, I opened a school at Fort Clark, on the Illinois River, which continued through the winter, and in which I had six Indian children whose progress was extremely flattering for so short a period.

In the spring of 1825, together with five families, I proceeded to the mouth of the Fox River, shortly after which I had a most satisfactory council with five chiefs of said tribe.

We immediately built cabins for the accommodation of the families. I then opened a school, into which I received fourteen Indian children; but finding that the station was not located on Indian land, I proceeded up the Fox River about thirteen miles farther, selected a situation, and am now preparing to remove to it, which I shall accomplish as soon as possible. In consequence of the sickness of my teacher, there is at present a vacation, which will continue until I erect a schoolhouse at the new station. I flatter myself that I shall then have at least one hundred children. The Indians have manifested great anxiety to have their children instructed in the arts of civilized life. I have received in support of the mission to the amount of about five hundred dollars in property, obtained by voluntary subscription, and the committee have voted, in addition, one thousand dollars, payable in quarterly installments--the first of which I received in cash, and have drafts on the treasurer of the Missionary Society for the remainder.

Being instructed to correspond with you quarterly, you may expect a communication in January next, when I hope I shall have it in my power to give you more satis-

factory information on the subject of my mission.

Your affectionate brother,  
Jesse Walker.

This letter from the Rev. Jesse Walker to the Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which followed the one quoted, but is not dated:

I have now closed the business of the Salem mission for the present year, and beg leave to state that in pursuance with the instructions of Bishop Roberts, I went on as soon as possible to the Indian country, and have made an agreement with the Pottawattomies, through their chiefs, for a section of land, in conformity with the articles adopted by the Illinois Conference; and have obtained the best presents which could be obtained from a rude and uneducated nation, signed by the interpreter as a mutual friend, which instrument (No. 1) accompanies this report. The place selected for the establishment is about 100 miles above Fort Clark, about 20 miles north of the Illinois River, and between it and Fox River. The soil is very good, timber plenty, and the spot well watered.

I have progressed as far as I could with my means, in building and improving. I have built a house for the accommodation of the family, which consists of eighteen persons. The house is fifty feet in length and twenty in width, two stories high, with apartments--hewed, and roofed with shingles. A smith's shop, a convenience that I could not dispense with, situated as I was, so remote from the settlements of the whites; a poultry house, spring house, and other conveniences. I have 40 acres of land in cultivation, 7 acres inclosed for pasture, one acre for garden--which have cost \$2,400. Our crops are good, I suppose worth \$200. when secured. Hitherto everything has been attended with much hardship, hunger, cold and fatigue; and the distance which we have to transport everything has made it expensive; but with regard to the settlement, the greatest obstacles are overcome, and a

few more years' labour will furnish a comfortable home and plenty.

I have talked with eight chiefs, all of whom are highly gratified with the mission, and have pledged themselves to use their great influence to support it in its religious character; but cannot legislate on the subject of religion; that, they say, is a matter between the Great Spirit and the hearts of their people; but they will defend and protect the mission family, and if the Indians will give up their children to the care and tuition of the missionaries, they will be glad of it, but they cannot coerce this measure.

The school consists of 15 Indian children, 7 males and 8 females, and two teachers. I am encouraged with the prospect of considerable acquisitions to the school this fall.

I have expended altogether in the establishment \$2,09. .98. The government has agreed to pay two-thirds of the expense, which would be \$1,394.00. I have received from the church \$1,000.00--which, added to the amount promised by government, makes \$2,394.00--to which add \$107. of donations, makes \$2,494.00! which, if the money were drawn from the government, would leave in my hands an unexpended balance of \$401.

I would here state that I have built a horse mill, and have it in operation. I have tried to be economical, and am conscious of also having done the best I could. A door of communication to the hearts of these poor, neglected, persecuted sons of men, before we can expect among them the exercise of an evangelical faith, must be opened; we must try and bring them to habits of civilization: The Gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven; and God no doubt will grant his blessing to the untiring perseverance in his cause.

In 1828 Walker wrote, "The Indians seem to understand me better. This is owing to the new interpreter. The old one has been turned off. As to religion, I am sorry to say I do not see that blessed work of God rising among them that I long prayed for. They have brought four

packs of cards and burnt them in my fire and some of them have promised to quit their drinking and go to work in the spring....

The following extract from a letter of Peter Cartwright, Presiding Elder, to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, dated June 15, 1827, at Fox River, throws further light on the Salem Mission.

There are many and great difficulties to be encountered in introducing the gospel among the poor children of the forest. These difficulties present themselves very formidably in the Pottawattomi nation. They are extremely superstitious, very proud, and given to all kinds of dissipation. But notwithstanding these, and a thousand other embarrassing considerations, we hope the Gospel will ultimately prevail. Our school still remains small, but the children learn very fast. There are also some recent signs of a work of grace in the hearts of one or two of the adult natives. If we had a religious interpreter, or if some of the old Indians were changed in heart, we think the work of God would rapidly spread among this wretched people. The mission is still in debt, and such is our remote situation that we have no ordinary means of relieving it. The mission family are all in health and pretty good spirits.

I would further observe to the secretary of the missionary society that I have had an interview with a Chipeway chief, a venerable looking old man, who now resides at the Pottawattomi mission, and who expresses an anxious desire that his nation should have a missionary sent them. They reside on the northwest of Lake Michigan. He says that the Ottaways and Chipeways are all anxious for a missionary, and will send all their children to school.

Then this extract of a letter from the Rev. Peter Cartwright, dated:

Sangamon, Ill., Sept. 15, 1827: Salem Mission

Our school yet remains small, but the children are orderly, learn fast, and give a satisfactory attention to the worship of God. One adult native has professed a change of heart, and has been baptized. The natives profess to be friendly to the mission, and assure us that we shall have more of their children. Our farm is in a prosperous state. Our present crop is worth about \$500; but there is considerable debt hanging on the mission which originated in its first establishment. We have endured great hardships this year, but the God of missions has supported us, and with the appropriations made by our bishops, we have met the current expenses of the year.

At the Annual Conference of 1827, a special committee on the Indian Mission reported as follows:

At the Illinois Conference held in Charleston in 1825, an allowance of one thousand dollars was made for the support of the Mission and put into the hands of the Missionary, Walker. From our recollection of the missionary report to the Conference for 1826, the money was laid out for the mission and a debt contracted for \$1,208.80, cash on hand to meet the debt \$150.00, which leaves the mission in debt \$1,058.00. At the Conference of 1826, and allowance was made for the support of the mission of \$1,000.00 and put into the hands of the Superintendent of the Mission. No debts had been contracted the past year. According to reports to this Conference, the mission property amounts to \$502.00. The property offered in the report, which we advised the Conference to accept and make Missionary property, amounts to \$250.00. If the Conference accepts this property, then the property and the crops belonging to the mission will amount to \$1,055.25.

But little has been affected as yet by the Missionary when compared to the expense, labor and suffering of the Missionary and his family; but when we consider what it has cost, and the probability of its being less expensive in the future, we cannot advise its discontinuance until further trial is made....(77)

John Dew, afterward Pastor at Galena, Illinois, was appointed collector in 1827. Among other things, Dew reports that Walker performed a marriage ceremony for George Furkee, his one-time interpreter, and one of the Indian girls in the school.

About this time the Federal Government, having since bought the Indian land, began the Indian Removal Policy by moving the Indians west of the Mississippi River. This had the effect of dooming the Salem Mission. Isaac Scarritt was appointed to the Mission by the Conference of 1828. The work of the mission soon fell apart; it may have been that it was Scarritt's assignment to liquidate and close, once and for all, Jesse Walker's ill-fated social experiment. The conference passed this resolution: "Resolved, that whereas the Pottawattomi Indians have been disposed of their lands where the Mission was located, it is inexpedient longer to continue a Mission to the Pottawattomi Indians and the same is hereby discontinued." (78)

A committee examined the claims that Jesse Walker had made to certain property and reported that he was entitled to the mill, smith tools, wagon, hogs, etc. It was decided that many of these items had been purchased with his own money and that he was justly entitled to them. On this part of Jesse's life, A. D. Field concluded, "...and thus sadly closed up five of the tiresome years of this arduous worker's life." The Conference had given long and patient attention to the work of Salem Mission, but to no avail. There is no record of fault-finding with Jesse Walker's work there either and this, in itself, is a tribute to this good and patient man.

Jesse Walker continued to work with the Indians at Salem Mission from the spring of 1825 until the autumn of 1828. In 1825-26 he called to help him some of his relatives. His brother, Dr. David Walker, came up in 1826 and entered claim on the section of land on which the city of Ottawa now stands. (79) As soon as the headquarters of his mission were established in 1825 he sent for his son-in-law, James Walker, and his wife (Jesse's daughter, Jane) to come and help in his christian work. James brought a horse mill with him and this was set up at the mission. This was also the first mill at Walker's Grove (now Plainfield). James became the overseer of the mission

farm and his wife, Jane, became the first and chief teacher to the Indians. While Jesse had been out on his missionary campaigns between 1806 and 1825, his family had generally found a home in some of the best communities of southern Illinois. Susannah, Jesse's wife, had been well educated; she saw to it that her daughters were also. Jane had not only the advantages of her mother's teachings, but she had also attended the best schools in Illinois of that time. When Jane came to the mission with her husband, she proved to be one of the most efficient teachers and helpers Jesse had.(80)

Father Walker, as he came to be called, could not escape his hope and faith in the conversion of the Indian people he encountered. This hope lived in him for the remainder of his life. This faith in their conversion to christianity is shown in a letter of Bishop R. Roberts, dated Chicago, November 25, 1830. It reads:

After my respects to you, I will give an account of my labors since Conference. I reached Chicago sufficiently soon to meet the Indians at the time of the payment; but the agent was on his death bed and he died a few days after; so that no council could be held, or anything, in short, be done with them. At length, after five days, starving and drinking, they gave them their money, and all broke up in confusion. One of the chiefs said that all must be laid over till the next year. I then went to see the Kickapoos and those of the Pottawattomies that had commenced to serve the Lord. I had to follow them down the Grand Prairie. Some I found on the Ambroise, some on the Little Wabash, Southeastern Illinois, and some on the Fox. This has taken me four weeks, in which I have been but a few nights in a house. The rains have been frequent; but the Lord has blessed me with health. I have returned to this place well, for which I am thankful. The Indians express a strong desire to settle themselves, and change their mode of living. There are three hundred of them who attend the worship of God morning and evening, and keep holy the Sabbath-day. I can only say that there can be no doubt but if they could get some-place, they would gladly settle themselves, and learn to

read the word of God, and till the earth. Such a place is promised them by the Pottawattomies. It is on the Kankakee, northeastern Illinois, and they are going to settle there in the spring.

A blessed field is open at this time for sending the Gospel to the North-west. God is raising up preachers of the right kind for this glorious work. Nearly two hundred Pottawattomies have already joined them. These people have laid aside ardent spirits altogether; also stealing, lying, cheating, quarreling, fighting and all manner of sin. They keep the Sabbath-day with all possible strictness, and speak feelingly of the divine influence of the Holy Spirit, and they exhort each other to give their hearts to the Savior. **I still have some hope that Chicago will some day receive the Gospel. I pray for the blessed time to roll on.**

Please to send me some instructions. My soul longs to see something done for these poor Indians.

Jesse Walker (81)

The above show the missionary zeal and spirit of this pioneer preacher. It should be remembered too that when this happened Jesse Walker was sixty-four years of age. Also concerning the above letter, Isaac Scarritt wrote in 1853, the following:

Brother Walker's ardent zeal to be the instrument of good to the Indians led him to view their improvement and prospects in religion and civilization in a more favorable light than could be indorsed by others not actuated by the same sanguine feelings. I was at the time acquainted with the history of the Indians alluded to in this letter. A leader and reformer had arisen from among themselves, who drew converts from several tribes. Many of his maxims and institutions appeared to be in accordance with the gospel, and it was a subject of much speculation among the white settlers as to whence he had derived his system, and whether it embraced the essence of Christianity. It seems they were not very anxious to put themselves under the guidance of white men, and Jesse

Walker never accomplished much among them.

S. R. Beggs, in writing to the author of this work, in 1884, says: With Jesse Walker, I visited the Kickapoos, at the head of Big Vermillion, about September, 1833. Long before we reached the camp we heard the prophet preaching. When he finished, we were introduced to him by a Negro interpreter. After the introduction, the prophet shouted, 'Ho! Ho! Ho!' very loud, and all the people--men, women, and children--came to us in single file, and shook hands with us. They had a triangle, which they said represented the ( ) Trinity. If any broke the Sabbath, they were tied up and whipped. One man was appointed to spank all the naughty children! They regarded the Sabbath, and kept it strictly. They never ate until all their religious services ended. Who taught them is not known. When Jesse Walker first found them, they were thus religious. What came of it? The Pottawatomies, coming from the East, stopped at a village on the Kickapoo River, when the roughs among the white people appeared with their whiskey, thinking to have sport at the expense of the Indians. The Indians persistently refused to drink, and could not be persuaded to touch the liquor. When asked why, they said they were baptized. When asked who baptized them, they answered, 'Father Walker.' Jesse Walker baptized many of the Pottawatomies at Salem, on Fox River. These never joined the Blackhawk War, but were always true to the whites. Their religious teachings saved much bloodshed in those cruel days. At this mission was a chief named Misshell, who had received two flags--one from the English, the other from the Americans. During the Blackhawk War, to express his idea, he raised the American flag high on a straight pole; but the English flag he raised on a pole at an angle of forty-five degrees, and thus expressed his idea of the superiority of the American stars!(82)

In the **History of Livingston County**, we find mention of Jesse Walker's work amongst the Kickapoo Indians. It seems there were many Kickapoos living in that area of Illinois at that

time. It appears Jesse was very successful in getting conversions among these people. It is also related that his converts were very scrupulous about observing the Sabbath and keeping it holy; the Indians would always return from their hunting trips on Saturday night. This book also relates about the prayer books the Indians had invented. They were black walnut boards, on which they had roughly carved the images and figures that represented their ideas. It is said that they never failed to consult this prayer book at night before retiring for their rest. Another story related about them in this book was about their dining habits. Their Sunday dinners were prepared in large kettles. After their religious services, the people lined up in rows, one of women, one of men, with children at the end of the line and the preacher at the head. This was how they received their dinners. A beautiful people!

In conclusion on Walker's Indian work, it would seem, maybe on the surface, his work was a total failure. You could say this, but I wouldn't, because it just is not true. Jesse may have thought his Indian missionary work a failure, but if we followed the Pottawattomies and Kickapoos in their wanderings westward and southward we would find that the seed of Christianity had been planted in these people by the pioneer preacher. If we were able to trace it in some way, and follow these Indian people in their travels throughout Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Texas, and into old Mexico, we might find a connection between Jesse Walker's work and Gospel victories among the Indian people many years later. One example of this would be the establishment of an Indian Mission Conference in Kansas which had the supervision and presidency of our Bishops.

I think a story can illustrate better what I am trying to say about Jesse Walker and his relationship to these Indian people than anything I can write or say here. Walker's step-daughter, Mrs. Eleanor Gorin, relates the following incident:

In the latter part of 1833, Glote Laflambeaux and his brother-in-law, Alexander Robinson, Chief of the Pottawattomie Tribe, received money from the Government; also blankets, blue broadcloth, blue calico, tobacco, clay pipes, ribbons, beads, etc. They had the money in two

bags, and not having full confidence in each other, they wanted the money counted out. They carried the money to Father Walker's house. It was all in silver half-dollars. They poured the money out on the table, and I was present when the counting was done. I don't know how much money there was, but after it was counted, it was stored in a trunk. Everything had to be settled for the Indians; they had perfect confidence in him and loved him deeply. They mourned for him when he died, and put stripes and black dots on their faces.(83)

What more can I say? They loved him.

Jesse Walker's chief labors from about 1825 on were among the opening settlements of the whites. When he arrived in Fort Clark (now Peoria) in 1824 there were probably no more than one hundred white settlers in northern Illinois. The only known points of settlement at that time were at Galena and at Chicago. A few roaming men were beginning to come up the Mississippi River during the summers to Galena to dig and work at the lead mines located there. In 1818 there were but two white families in Chicago outside the fort. They were: John Kinzie's family, on the north side near State Street, and Antoine Oulimette, a French trader, who had married an Indian woman, who lived on the north side near Dearborn Street. When Walker visited Chicago in 1825 there were probably not more than a dozen people besides the soldiers. In 1829, the white population was listed as: Doctor Wolcott, Indian agent and son-in-law of John Kinzie, on Clark Street, north of the river; John Miller, who kept a tavern on the west side at The Point; John B. Beaubien, on Michigan Avenue; and three or four traders on the west side and John Kinzie. In 1830 the population was noted as: Kinzie, Wolcott, Miller, Wm. See, James Kinzie, and a few French Canadians, laborers, and boatmen.(84)

In 1828 Jesse Walker was Superintendent of the Fox River Mission, John Dew the presiding elder. In 1829 the name had been changed to Salem Mission, as already has been discussed. Peter Cartwright was the presiding elder, and Isaac Scarritt was the preacher in charge. Jesse was sent to the

DesPlaines Mission and in the same year formed a class at Walker's Grove (now Plainfield.) The Rev. S. R. Beggs says:

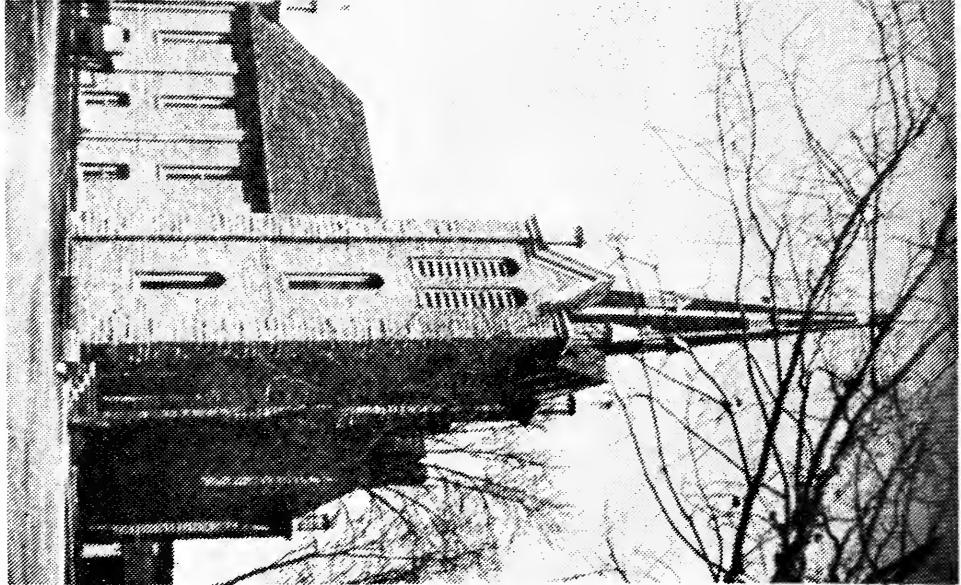
...This, I think, was the first class in the bounds of the Rock River Conference, but as soon as the mission was abandoned the class was given up. This same year Jesse Walker settled in Walker's Grove, now Plainfield. The names of the above class were as follows: Jesse Walker and Susannah his wife, James Walker and wife, brother Fisk and wife, Timothy B. Clark and wife, brother Weed and wife--about twelve in all.

This same year there was a class formed in Galena by John Dew; yet when I examine closely I have to decide in favor of Plainfield's being the first permanent class. In the year 1833 I succeeded Jesse Walker, commencing in the Fall of 1832. I took charge of DesPlaines mission, Jesse Walker presiding elder. In the winter of 1833 the first temperance meeting was held in this upper country. The speakers were Mr. Arnold, James Walker, and myself. We made considerable effort, which was productive of some good; yet we were partially shorn of our strength, there being a small store in the place, where, among other things, whiskey was kept for sale, and as the firm, two of the leading men present, would not sign the pledge, it kept many others back. Yet those who did sign stood firm, and we have continued to battle for the cause of temperance ever since.

We raised, by the assistance of brother Ross, a permanent fund of \$15,000, by means of which we drove the last doggery from Plainfield. These same efforts might be made in other places were they to continue unitedly and perseveringly. May the Lord pity the fainthearted, and make them more than ever bold and able advocates of this great cause! This year was closed with some conversions; members returned, thirty-four....(85)

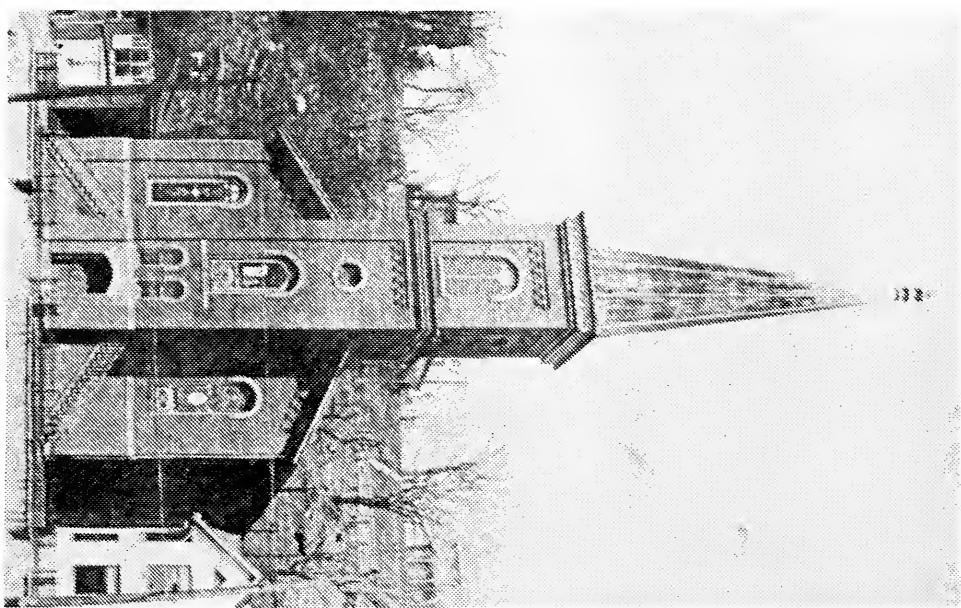
If we can leave Jesse for awhile longer, let's follow the career of the Rev. S. R. Beggs a little further and hear what he has to tell us about the early history of the church in Plainfield and something about Plainfield itself. He goes on to state:

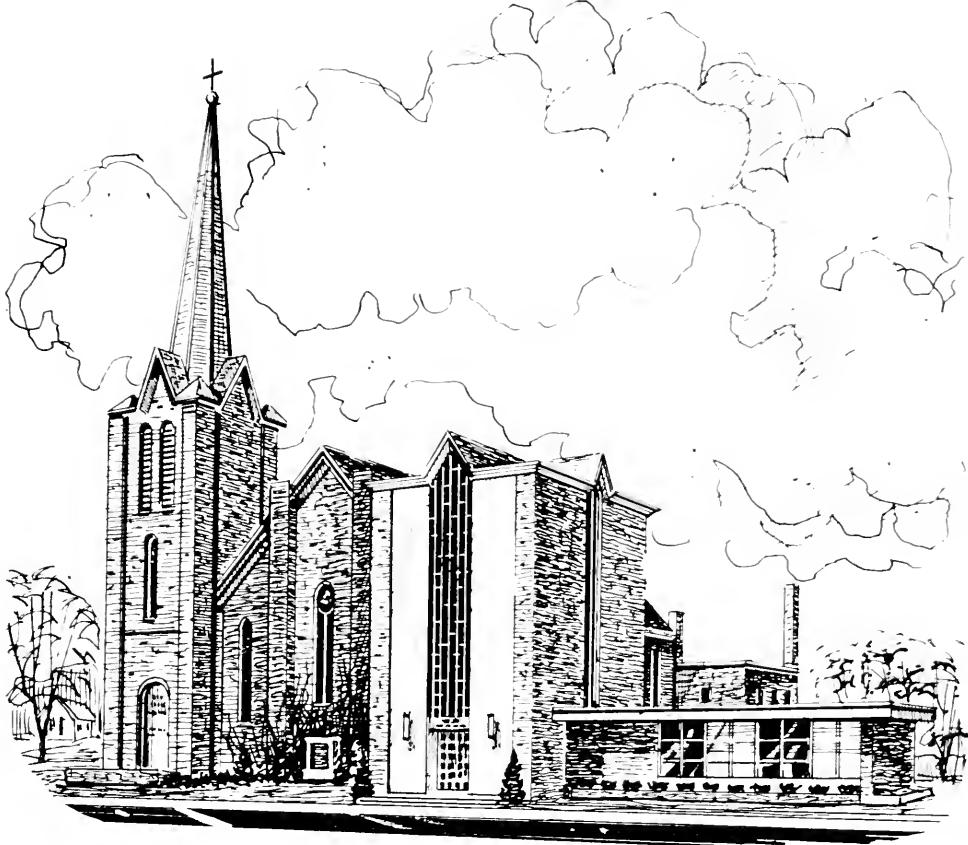
## Plainfield United Methodist Church



There has long been an argument as to which church is the older. It is a near tie, but I opt in favor of Jesse Walker and the class he started here in Walker's Grove.

## Galena United Methodist Church





# *Plainfield United Methodist Church*

PLAINFIELD, ILLINOIS

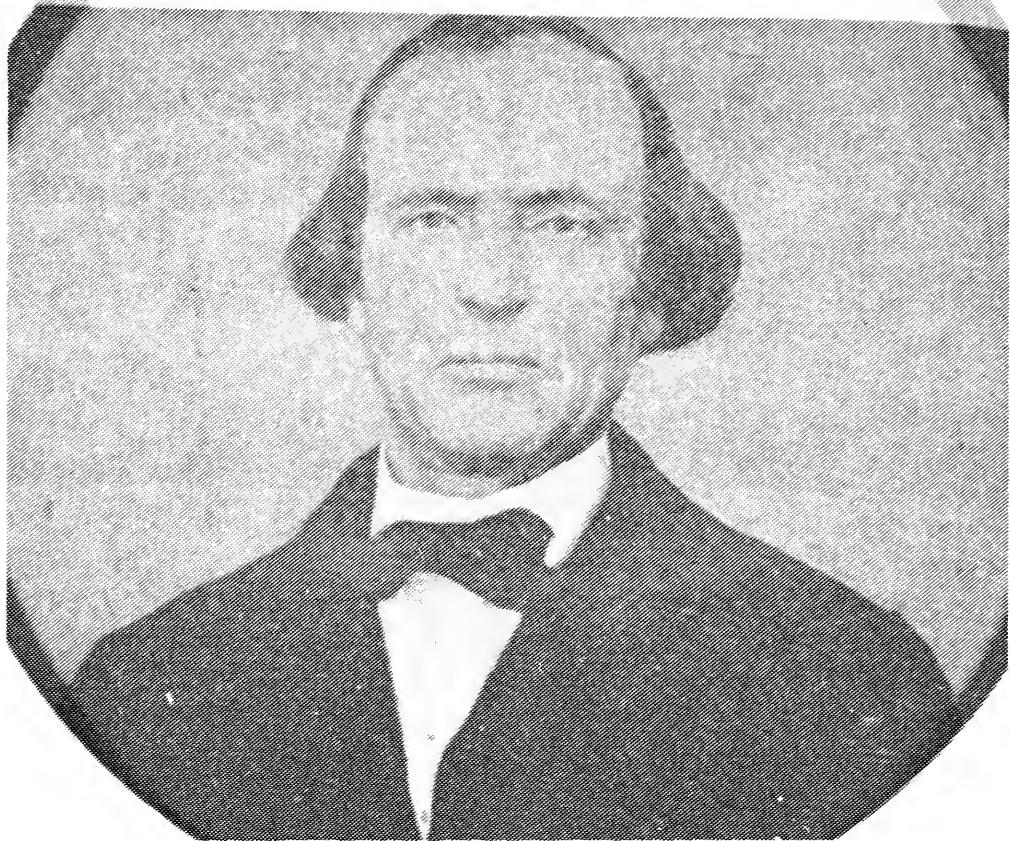
## *Our Church*

In the Spring of 1829 Reverend Jesse Walker called together ten settlers in Walker's Grove (now Plainfield) to form the first Methodist congregation of Northern Illinois. The first preaching place was a log cabin house measuring 14' by 14'.

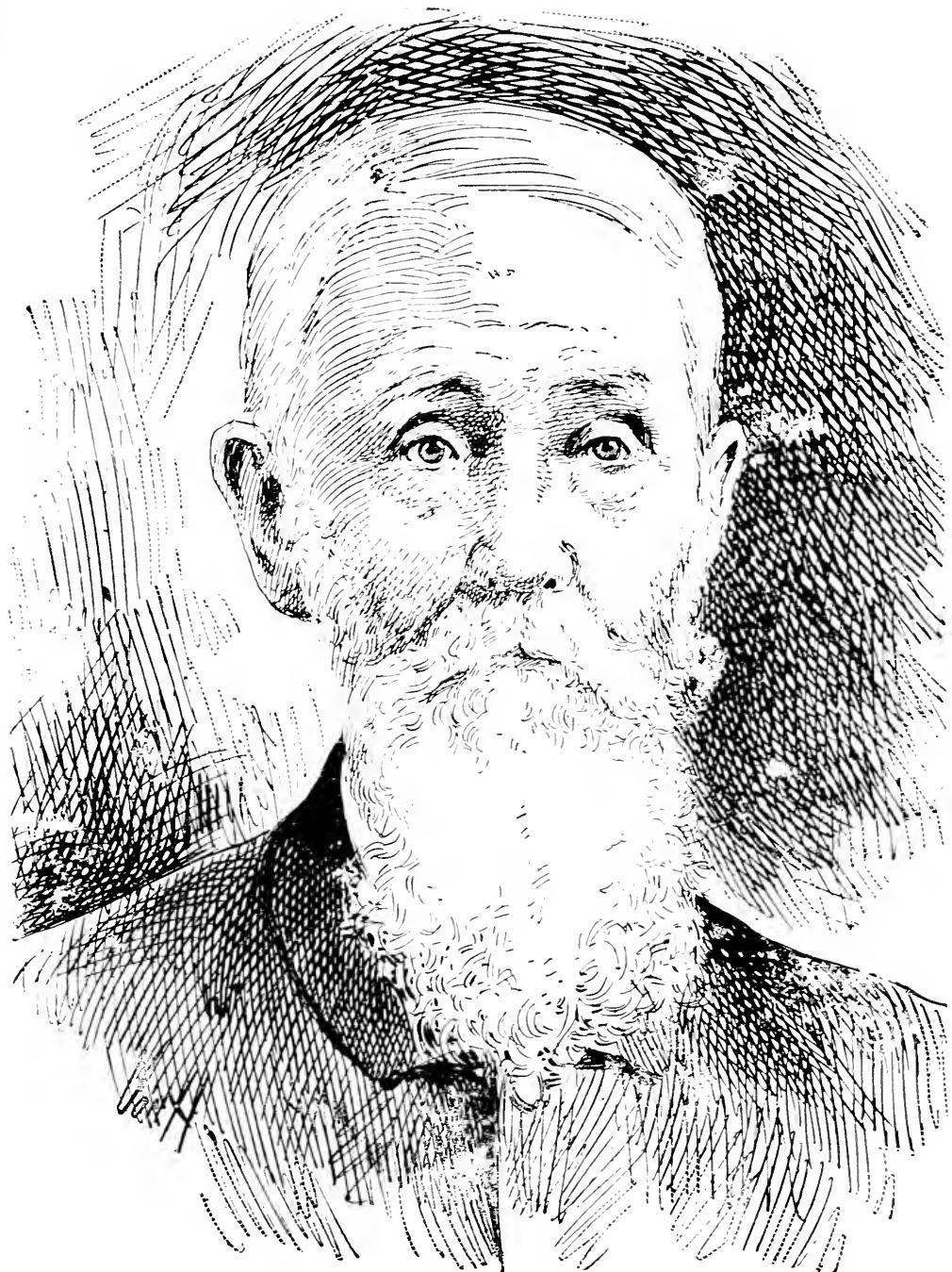
The present church building, the fourth to house the congregation, was completed in 1868 built of stone from a local quarry. Over the years the building has seen many renovations and additions. The present tower entrance and educational unit was completed in 1968. A unique feature of our church is the ten bell carillon in the steeple. The sanctuary has a seating capacity of 350. There are classrooms for all ages. In addition, there are offices, a nursery, chapel, library, kitchen and fellowship hall.

The Plainfield United Methodist Church has both the desire and the facilities to serve its congregation and the community.

## REVEREND JESSE WALKER



This picture has been purported by many to be the Rev. Jesse Walker, I personally question its validity. It came from a copper plate found in the Plainfield United Methodist Church. It may indeed well be Jesse Walker, but I doubt it. I would be more inclined to believe it was his son-in-law, James Walker, who came later and was better known in state politics and so on. Cameras were not known on the early frontier at the time Jesse was here. This picture may even be someone else entirely. Probably someone at some point in time thought this was Jesse Walker and that story and picture came down through the years. We may never ever really know for sure.



**REV. STEPHEN R. BEGGS**

In the Fall of 1833 I was returned to DesPlaines mission. This was the year when the tide of speculation rolled in upon us of which I have before made mention. The year closed with a membership of fifty-seven, J. Sinclair presiding elder. In the Fall of 1834 David Blackwell was my successor--a fine young preacher and a good pastor. He was on the ground to receive all emigrants, who, by this time, were very numerous, both from the East and South. The year closed with a good camp meeting. The members returned numbered one hundred and seventeen. J. Sinclair presiding elder. He was returned in the Fall of 1835, with W. B. Mack presiding elder. He had a pleasant year, with some increase; members returned, one hundred and sixty.

In the Fall of 1836 the name was changed to Joliet circuit, and I was appointed here, with M. Turner for my colleague, W. B. Mack presiding elder. This year hard riding, much labor, and great success; members returned, two hundred and fifty-three, embracing Plainfield. In this year I got up a subscription to build a church in Plainfield. It was soon under way, and finished before the hard times set in, but it was a long time before we paid off its debt. The Baptists built one also, about the same time, and we soon had two churches to worship in, and a glorious revival was the result. In 1837, on my return to Joliet, I got a subscription, and a church was commenced which William Crissey, my successor, finished the next year. He was a good preacher, a faithful pastor, and possessed a good business tact. He had a good revival, and a return of two hundred and thirty-seven members. The decrease is accounted for by a division of the work.

Forked Creek circuit was formed in 1838. William Crissey, A. Chenoweth, and myself as supernumerary, were the preachers. This year our labors were so successful that our members numbered one hundred and eighty-eight. In 1839 a new circuit was formed called Milford, Elihu Springer preacher in charge, and J. Sinclair presiding elder. This circuit embraced all east of Fox River, with Oswego and Plainfield. The same preachers

and presiding elder were returned in 1840, and a gracious revival was experienced, especially in Plainfield. Such a time of confession and humiliation on the part of the members of all denominations had never been witnessed, and the result was the conversion of sinners and the building up of membership of all Churches. Dr. Comstock's labors were greatly blessed. He had but few equals in preaching, and the Word came with power and full of the Holy Ghost. This year he returned two hundred and four members....(86)

And so it was in Plainfield, Illinois, in 1840, at least, according to the Rev. Beggs, but let us return now to the primary concern here, the narrative and doings of the Rev. Jesse Walker, our pioneer preacher.

Isaac Scarritt, who succeeded Walker as Superintendent of the Salem Mission, was living where Ottawa now stands. Pierce Hawley, Edmund Weed, and J. Beresford lived at what was known as Holderman's Grove, a few miles northwest of the present Morris, Illinois. These, with Walker's own family at the mission, made up most of the known population north and west of the Illinois River and between Peoria, Chicago, and Galena. Scarritt visited Chicago in 1829 and said of it at that time: "In addition to the garrison at Fort Dearborn, Chicago contained the old Kinzie House, a new house of Col. Hamilton's, with perhaps one or two others in that quarter and those of J. Kinzie and J. Miller up at the Point (the fork of the Chicago River)."(87)

William See, a local preacher, later of Chicago, traveled the Peoria Circuit in 1827 and Smith L. Robertson traveled it in 1828. Jesse Walker assisted Robertson in a camp meeting in 1828, three miles north of Peoria on Farm Creek. Governor Edwards, the first Governor of Illinois, it is said, was present here. A story is told that a certain man passed that way going to get a supply of whiskey. He stopped on his way to hear the sermon and when the collection plate was passed, he placed his whiskey money in the plate, and returned home without his whiskey, saying, "I thought the preacher needed the money more than I needed the whiskey." There is also a record of Walker holding a camp meeting a half mile above Peoria in

1826. Beggs says: "William Holland moved up an old log cabin for use as a tent. The old hero (Walker) had with him his son (James Walker, his son-in-law) and others. He was assisted by Reeves McCormack."(88)

In 1832, the Fort Clark Mission boundaries were, as follows: Peoria, Lancaster, (now LaSalle Prairie), Brother Jones' on Snake River, Princeville, Essex Schoolhouse, Frakers Grove (now LaFayette), and on to Princeton some thirty miles farther, and then to Troy Grove twenty-five miles farther, Brother Long's, near LaSalle and then down the river to Miller's Schoolhouse, five miles below Peru, then to John Jawl's, a round distance of about 150 miles around the Circuit. It seems clear, also, that Walker had more interests than his Salem Mission. His wife, daughter, and the hired teacher, Essex, handled that, it would appear, while Jesse traveled far and wide in search of new white settlers. He had heard from the Indians that there were new settlers in McLean County at what was then known as Blooming Grove, now Bloomington, Illinois. Jesse set out late in 1824 to find them. John Hendrix, who built the first cabin in McLean County in 1822, says that Jesse Walker visited him in 1824. The story was told in a Centennial Program of the First Methodist Church of Bloomington in this way:

It is a deep, cold winter. The snow lies heavy on the small log house and barn of John Hendrix, which some friendly Indians helped him build the summer before. A stranger rides to the door and calls. Too stiff from cold to alight, he is carried into the little cabin before a blazing log fire by John Hendrix. As soon as he is able to make known his mission, he says, 'I am Jesse Walker. I am a Methodist minister. I live in St. Louis and have heard of a white family up here among the Indians, and have come to find you. Are you converted?' Each replies, 'Yes.' The little group kneels in prayer and John Hendrix is made a class leader in anticipation of the arrival of other white families. Thus is born the Methodist Church.(89)

At the 56th Anniversary of the First Methodist Church of Bloomington in 1881, which dates the class back to 1825, when

Walker was at Peoria, J. E. McClum, in a memorial address, after listing former pastors in certain categories, said: "And while others might well be included in another list I shall make, namely men of marked piety and deeply devoted to God, I am sure you will consent to head the list with these names: Jesse Walker, William Royal, etc."(90)

After Jesse's work with the Indians and among the early white settlements of northern Illinois we find him after 1830 busily engaged in planting the standard of the cross in Chicago and its' surrounding country. He went up to Chicago with John Hamlin and a crew of six in the spring of 1825. John Hamlin's mother had been a member of the Peoria class; he later became a member too. They ascended the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers in a Mackinaw boat.(91) Hamlin said of this excursion: "Walker had prayers with us night and morning. When we laid by every afternoon, the old pioneer would line hymn after hymn, and he and the boys would make the woods ring with old Methodist hymns."(92)

At this time there were few people in Chicago, as I have already explained, and it would be out of character if Walker did not preach there. Chicago was then a mud-hole. Why did Jesse Walker want to go on this long and tiresome journey to Chicago? There are probably two answers: one, to gain more information about the Indians in the area before finally locating his mission; two, to see what spiritual need there was among the handful of white settlers in Chicago. As early as 1825, there appears on his books credits of moneys received from people then living in the Chicago area. Again, in 1828, he was on Peoria Mission, which at that time extended to Chicago. During the year he resided at Walker's Grove he must surely have visited Chicago. It has always been understood among his relatives, many of whom lived between Ottawa and Chicago from 1825 onward, that Jesse was early at Chicago preaching God's word to the people there. From the beginning we find that he had much influence at Chicago in these early times. He was a clerk at an election held in August, 1830, and after Cook County was organized in March, 1831, he was appointed by the Commissioners to borrow the money and go to the land office and enter land for the use of the city. We also find on the county clerk's records of 1831 the following: "July 6. By Jesse

Walker, an elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, married, Joseph Thebalt to Charlotte Tosenben. "July 9. By the same minister, Daniel W. Vaughn to Angeline Hebart." (93)

The following account comes to us again from A. D. Field's book, in which he states:

William See, a local preacher, moved into Chicago in 1830; the family of Elijah Wentworth appeared in November, 1830; and Mrs. R. J. Hamilton and Mrs. & Dr. Harmon came in the spring of 1831. During the fall of 1830 and winter of 1831, there was quite frequent preaching. William See preached every two weeks in his own house, and Jesse Walker preached as often as once a month as he went the rounds of his large circuit. A quarterly-meeting for the circuit was held in the winter of 1831, but no regular class was formed until the summer of that year. At the time just mentioned, Stephen R. Beggs was on the Tazewell Circuit in Tazewell County, and Isaac Scarritt was on the Fort Clark Mission. Two camp-meetings were appointed to be held one after the other, one at Cedar Point, on Isaac Scarritt's work, and the other at Plainfield, on Jesse Walker's mission. To these meetings came these three preachers, and Wm. See, the lone local preacher at Chicago. Smith L. Robinson was at Galena at this time, but was not at the meeting. These five were all the Methodist preachers in 1831 between Springfield and the North pole!

From the camp-meeting held in July at Plainfield, Jesse Walker, S. R. Beggs, and William See set out for Chicago. They arrived on Monday evening, and gathered the people into Dr. Harmon's house at the fort, to listen to the gospel as proclaimed by Brother Beggs. An appointment was given out for preaching the next forenoon. The congregation of about thirty persons gathered into the log-house where William See resided at The Point, on the West Side. Brother Beggs preached again, and they had a refreshing season. At the close of the sermon the preacher (S. R. Beggs) gave an invitation for people to join the church. Eight persons presented themselves. These were William See, Minerva See, Mrs. Lucy

W. Wentworth, Sabiah Wentworth, Susan Wentworth, Elijah Wentworth, Jr., Caroline Harmon, and Mrs. R. J. Hamilton. A few weeks after, August 4th, Mark Noble and family arrived in Chicago. Brother Noble, his wife, two daughters, and a son all joined the class. At first William See was appointed leader, but soon Mark Noble became the leader in more senses than one. This was the first Christian society ever formed in Chicago. For a few months in the spring of 1833, by removals and the appearance of the cholera, the class was left very small, but new members coming in early in the fall of that year the society recovered itself, and from that day there has never ceased to be a growing Methodism in that stupendous city.

In the fall of 1831 Jesse Walker was appointed to the Mission District and in charge of Deplane Circuit. This circuit included all the country outside of Chicago down to the Illinois River. Very little was done, however, that year on any of the circuits on this district on account of the Black Hawk War, which, while small in itself, kept the people in a state of fright all summer long. The people gathered in barricade log-houses at Dupage and at Plainfield for a few days, and then all fled to Fort Dearborn, at Chicago, where they lived a long time, until the cholera brought to the place by General Scott's troops drove the people back to their homes. S. R. Begg's house at Plainfield was turned into a fort, and with the crowd that gathered there for protection was Jesse Walker and his family; and when they all fled to Fort Dearborn, Jesse Walker went with the crowd. This brought four Methodist preachers into the fort. They were Jesse Walker, S. R. Beggs (who was stationed at Chicago that year), Isaac Scarritt, and William See. Most of these took their turns in preaching to the people while shut up in the fort. The year on all the circuits was nearly a failure. Jesse Walker reported but thirty-four members from his Deplane Circuit.

The next year (1832) Brother Walker was appointed to the Chicago District, and also in charge of the Chicago Mission. The district included four charges. These were



**Black Hawk, a Sauk brave**

SITE OF  
FORT BEGGS

ERECTED 1832

AS A PROTECTION AGAINST THE INDIANS

ERECTED BY  
WILL COUNTY CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE  
1936

This stone marks the site of Fort Beggs. It is on high school property on South River Road in Plainfield. During the Black Hawk War, Rev. Begg's home was converted into an impromptu fort, thus its name.

Chicago, Deplane, Peoria, and Pekin. He had for his workers S. R. Beggs, Zadoc Hall, and Jesse Haile.

Before Conference his beloved wife, Susannah, had died. The poor man was now alone, without home, only as he found it with his children. He immediately procured the old log-house at Chicago in which William See lived when the first class was formed in 1831, as a lodging-place for himself when in town, and as a place of meeting. This is the famous Father Walker's Log Church which appears in all the annals of early Chicago. It was the first church, or meeting-house of any sort, in the city. It was a double log-house, situated at The Point, on the west side of the river, about two hundred feet from the point where the two branches united. There was a door at each end, and a connecting door in the inner partition. Brother Walker fitted up one-half of this house as a meeting-place, and in the other he lodged by himself when he was in the village. Up to 1836 there was a room of some note on the North Side called Watkin's School-house, which was often used as a meeting-house. The first quarterly-meeting of John Sinclair's appointment as presiding elder was held there in 1833.

The above will be explained by the following notes. The quotation is from John Watkins, the first school-teacher in Chicago. He says:

“I commenced teaching in the fall after the Black Hawk War of 1832. My first school-house was situated on the North Side, about half way between the lake and the forks of the river, then known as Wolf's Point. The building was owned by R. J. Hamilton; was erected as a stable. It was twelve feet square... After the first quarter I moved my school into a double log-house on the West Side. It was owned by Rev. Jesse Walker, and was located near the bank of the river where the north and south branches meet. He resided in one end of the house, and I taught in the other. On Sundays Father Walker preached in the room where I taught.”

“Jesse Walker was my successor in 1832,” writes S. R. Beggs. “Myself and wife attended his first quarterly-meeting. The meeting-house, parsonage, parlor, and

kitchen were all the same old log-house that we formed the first class in 1831. Mrs. Beggs and myself were permitted to dine with the old hero. His stove was one of the box kind, with one griddle-hole. Here he boiled the tea-kettle, fried the meat, and boiled the scanty vegetables, each in its turn. He had for his table a large chest, and when dinner was served we surrounded the chest, and having good appetites, the dinner was refreshing."

The first Sunday-school in Chicago--first a union, now the First Presbyterian--was commenced in August, 1832. From April, 1833, to August, the school was held in the log church.

Rev. Jeremiah Porter arrived in Chicago May 4, 1833, and preached his first sermon in Jesse Walker's meeting-house. He organized the First Presbyterian Church on June 26, 1833. After the organization, the following service occurred: "At our first communion season," says Mr. Porter, "in that old school-house of logs, sitting on oak slabs, we had very little to suggest present luxuries, except one silver cup, brought by Major Wilcox from his own table....That house, called Father Walker's, at The Point, on the West Side, witnessed the first communion season of our Church on the west shore of Lake Michigan, except at the Stockbridge Mission, at Green Bay." The first Methodist communion in Chicago has occurred in January, 1832.

James Rockwell, who had a great deal to do with Chicago Methodism from 1834 till 1838, in speaking of various matters, says: "I arrived in Chicago May 18, 1834; Jesse Walker missionary; a log church; the Bible lay on the center-beam. It was held sacred by the whites and Indians. At the Indian payment we had some disturbance in our worship. On arriving once for evening prayer-meeting, we found the Indians had stored pork, saddles, blankets, etc., in the house. Father Walker requested their removal; said they were desecrating God's house. The things were all removed at once. Being encamped near the house, they became quite noisy through strong drink. A kind word from the preacher made all quiet, which showed their respect for one they

knew to be their friend."

The Methodists--as we shall see--built a neat frame-house in 1834. Until then, to accommodate the three sections of the city, the meetings were divided between the log church, Watkin's school-house, and Mark Noble's house, on the lake-shore, south of the fort. It is rather a curious fact that all sides have had the **first** Methodist Church. The first church, the humble log-house, was on West Side; the first frame on the North, which was finally moved to the South Side, where the one lone Methodist society in the city worshipped from 1838 to 1845....(94)

Having seen something of Jesse Walker's activities in early Chicago from Field's account let's try to establish a better description of that city in those early days. The Conference of 1830 changed the name of the Fox River Mission to the Chicago Mission and appropriated \$250.00 to support the work. Andres, in his book, **Early Chicago**, says:

In March, 1831, Cook County was organized, including the present Cook, Lake, McHenry, DuPage and Will Counties. The first County Commissioners were: Samuel Miller, Carlson Mercheval, for Chicago, and James Walker for DuPage. At the first session an order was passed that the southwest fraction of section 10, township 9, range 14 east, be entered for county purposes. The treasurer was authorized to borrow \$100.00 with which to make the entry, at a rate of interest of 6%. Jesse Walker was appointed as Agent to enter the land. The project failed. Mr. Walker, at a subsequent meeting in June, reported that he had been refused permission to make the entry and returned the money. Three voting precincts were ordered: Chicago, Hickory Creek and DuPage.(95)

Fort Dearborn was established in 1804 and that can be stated as the beginning of the city of Chicago. For many years the only inhabitants of the place were a garrison of about fifty men at the fort, a few wandering Indians, and a handful of fur trappers and traders. Fort Dearborn was destroyed during the

War of 1812 and the garrison was nearly wiped out by the Indians; fifty-two were reported as slain and others taken captive, including their leader, Captain Heald. Among other early settlers in Chicago were John Kinzie, who came in 1804 as already cited, and Gurdon S. Hubbard, who represented the American Fur Company in 1816. In 1818 there were two white families there and Antoine Ouilmette, a French fur trader who was married to an Indian woman, both of whom I've already mentioned in this account. At that time Chicago had communication with the outside world once a year by a ship which came in from Buffalo, New York with supplies. Chicago's first real publicity came through a discussion of a canal to connect Lake Michigan through the Des Plaines River with the Illinois River. This discussion began in 1814 and the canal was surveyed in 1824; the project was put through Congress in 1827. The prospect of a business boom drew many people and speculators to this area of Illinois. Town sites were laid out and lots sold at ridiculous prices for those times. Chicago was platted in 1830, but work did not begin on the canal until 1836. In 1820 there were twelve log cabins and a total of sixty people living in Chicago. Many of these, it seems, were half-breeds. The voting population was thirty-five in 1826. By 1830 the population had risen to about one hundred. The store and shop keepers of that time were Mark Beaubien, LaFramboise, Robinson, and Wolcott. The homes of that time were those of Kinzie, Mackee, Portier, Miller, Beaubien, Wentworth and See. To these family names we can add the following property: Fort Dearborn, a barn, a well, a garden, and one grave. Mrs. Walker said in 1834 that she could stand in her own doorway and count all of the houses in the town. A visitor to Chicago in 1836 described it as a "dreary, desolate place."

A. D. Field, whom I have often quoted here, came to Chicago in 1835 and afterward made a careful study of early Chicago. This is one description that he gave:

The city commenced its growth in three clusters, one at the Forks or 'Point' on the west side, another near the fort, and a third on the north side near the lake. These clusters continued to be separate until about 1840, when

they became one. The lots between the 'Point' and the Fort were of little value and for a time the 'Point' seemed to have the ascendancy. The richer part of the town, however, was on the north side near the lake. There, in 1836, a fine hotel, the Lakehouse, and the St. James Church was built, and there arose the first private residence of any size. Timber skirted the river bank nearly to its mouth and the north side was entirely covered with woods when the town was laid out. The writer cut pea bushes and gathered hazel nuts near the ground occupied by the Board of Trade Building as late as 1836, among the stumps and bushes. Lynx and wild cats were killed in the woods in the neighborhood of the Rock Island depot on Van Buren Street in 1834. In one day, in October of that year, one bear and forty wolves were killed between the Forks and Bridgeport. The city was built on a clay bed and up to 1843 teams were often mired down on Lake Street.(96)

The Rev. S. R. Beggs always claimed the honor of organizing the first Methodist class in Chicago and says: "I appointed William See Class Leader." On the point of this statement, John D. Bernhardt, Jr., in the July, 1919 issue of the **Illinois Historical Society Journal**, states: "I do not mean to question Beggs' sincerity, but to insist that honor go to Walker, where it belongs. Beggs would not have been in Chicago had it not been for Walker, and what is more important, it was Walker who pioneered all the work from Peoria north to Chicago."(97)

In 1831 the Conference formed a Mission District, with Galena, Fort Clark and Chicago, and two new missions, Des Plaines and Rock Island. Walker was made Superintendent of this Mission District. He was also preacher in charge of the Des Plaines Circuit, which included all of the territory outside of Chicago between the Fox and Des Plaines Rivers. S. R. Beggs that year was appointed by Walker to Chicago. One might wonder why Walker wanted to leave Chicago so soon after organizing a class for which he had so long prayed and worked. Maybe it was because he liked the younger Beggs and thought that he could do a better job there for the church. Or, it may

have been that Jesse wanted to get back out in the wilds to shepherd his far-flung flock. We will never know for sure. Very little seems to have been accomplished this year in and around Chicago because of the Black Hawk War scare and an outbreak of cholera coming to Chicago with General Scott's soldiers.

In the winter of 1832, Jesse Walker was on the Deplane charge, and was also the superintendent of the district, according to Field. Brother Beggs, from Chicago, went down to Walker's Grove to assist Brother Walker in holding a quarterly meeting. At the close of this meeting, Beggs and Walker set out for Chicago on one of the coldest days of the year. Field tells the story in this way:

...It was thirty miles to the first house. A brother, T. B. Clark by name, started with them with an ox-team laden with provisions which were scarce and high in Chicago. The preachers reached the first house, and put up for the night. They waited long for Clark and his ox-team, and then set out on a fruitless search for him. He did not come up till midnight. The next day they all arrived safely in Chicago, and met a warm reception from William See and wife. The meeting commenced with interest, and increased in power until its close. Sunday morning, after preaching, at 10:30 a.m., Jesse Walker invited the little band around the sacramental board. It was a season long to be remembered, that **first communion season** in Chicago. Who were the communicants has not been recorded; but we know all the members of the class that joined in 1831 were yet living in Chicago, and were still members of the Methodist Church....(98)

In the summer of 1833 many people began to come into this country. There was quite a class formed on the Des Plaines, ten miles west of Chicago. There is no record of the appointments Jesse Walker filled, but he must have had many members from out of the city because at the Conference he reported forty members and there were not more than eight or ten at that time in Chicago proper. Jesse was returned to Chicago in 1833 and John Sinclair was appointed to take charge of the Chicago

District.

In the spring of 1832, Jesse's faithful and loving wife, Susannah, his mate of forty-six years, died, leaving him companionless and homeless, except for his children. It seems from the record that she died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. James Walker, at Plainfield, and was buried there in the old cemetery. Her grave is now beside her husband in the new Plainfield Cemetery.

In July of 1833, Jesse Walker married again and settled in his last home here on earth, a log cabin on the Des Plaines River, ten miles west and a little north of the center of Chicago.

According to A. D. Field, Walker remarried in July, 1833. His stepdaughter, Mrs. Eleanor Gorin, says the marriage was in 1833 and that William See performed the ceremony. S. R. Beggs says it was in the fall of 1834 and that he performed the wedding. I think the facts would bear out Field's and Mrs. Gorin's accounts, rather than Beggs's version. Jesse's marriage was to Mrs. Isaac Fawcett. There seems to have been a conspiracy of silence about his second wife; not too much is really known about her, except that her first name was Rebecca.

It seems the Fawcetts were from Virginia and they came west some time between 1823 and 1830 and settled near Decatur, Illinois. Mr. Fawcett died shortly after their arrival here. As already stated, Mrs. Rebecca Fawcett married Jesse Walker in 1833. It is not known where they met. The newly married Walkers moved to Jesse's farm on the Des Plaines River after his retirement from the ministry. Mrs. Fawcett had an eleven year old daughter, Eleanor Elizabeth, when she married Jesse. After Walker's death, Mrs. Walker and her daughter moved back to Decatur in 1838. The daughter grew up and married the Honorable Jerome R. Gorin, thus is was the Mrs. Gorin that I have been relating to got her name. Judge Gorin was a prominent merchant and banker in the city of Decatur, and also, a leader in the Methodist Church. Mrs. Gorin lived a long time to tell her tales of life with the pioneer preacher. She always held her step-father, Jesse Walker, in high esteem.

The first quarterly meeting for Chicago for the year was held in the fall in Watkin's School House. Those present were:

John Sinclair, presiding elder; Jesse Walker, Circuit preacher; William See and Henry Whitehead, local preachers; Minerva See, Charles Wissencraft and wife, Mrs. R. J. Hamilton, and Mrs. Caroline Harmon. These made up the entire Methodist family at that time. The Nobles and Wentworths had moved in the spring of the year and settled on the north branch of the Chicago River. In the spring of 1834 the rush began to come to Chicago. Among them were many Methodists, including: Grant Goodrich and Robinson Tripp, who remained members until their deaths.

Very little of interest happened to the pioneer preacher in this year, except for the building of a Methodist church in Chicago. Volume 1, Number 1 of the **Chicago Democrat**, the first newspaper published in Chicago, dated November 26, 1833, says: "Married in this village of the 17th inst. by the Reverend Jesse Walker, Mr. Gilbert Carpenter to Mrs. Minerva Hodge." Walker's step-daughter, Mrs. Gorin says: "Father Walker helped to lay off some of the streets in Chicago early in the spring of 1834. They sent him to assist them in this work. I remember when he came home he told us that most of the streets were named for the Presidents and that one was named Dearborn, after the Fort." A notice appeared in the paper of a meeting of the Chicago Bar in August, 1835, at the Methodist Chapel, to take notice of the death of Chief Justice John Marshall. Meetings were held on the canal project; one was held on October 29th in the Chapel and "a great canal meeting" was reported on October 30th. This was some of the activity in the city of Chicago in those early years.(99)

The Catholics built a small chapel with a bell on State Street in 1833. The Presbyterians, as already related, also erected a chapel and school house on the alley between Randolph and Lake Streets in the fall of 1833. These were the first two churches of Chicago; the Methodist Church was the third. The building of the new church must have been largely managed by Jesse Walker. He signed the contract for the building, furnished most of the material, and raised the means for building. The building was erected and stood on the corner of North Water and Clark Streets until its removal to the South Side in 1838. The contract negotiated for this church was about the last official business of any account that Jesse Walker

performed. It reads:

We, the undersigned, agree to build a Methodist Episcopal Church, 26 x 38 feet, agreeable to the following specifications, for the sum of \$580:

Good pine timber for sills; 12 feet posts and plates; joists  $2\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 inches; studs, braces, rafters, and tie-beams, 3 x 4 inches; sheet and shingle the roof; elliptic cove roof; floor  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch, grooved and tongued; seats with board backs, and a rail of separation down the middle; 11 window-frames and sash, 24 lights each, primed and glazed complete; a neat pulpit, 6 x 3 feet 6 inches, steps up one side, panel work with molding, and pilasters, and seat inside; the pulpit to be raised four inches on a platform for table and chairs; 2 eight-panel  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch front doors, with moldings, the front and one side to be planed; a neat cornice in front, and returned on one side; base around the floor,--the whole to be done in a workmanlike manner.

Henry Whitehead,  
John Stewart.

I agree to accept of these propositions given by Henry Whitehead and John Stewart, on the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Signed on the 30th day of June, 1834.

Jesse Walker.(100)

Three great churches: Centenary in St. Louis, First Church in Peoria, and First Church, The Temple, in Chicago and many other churches, large and small, including our church here in Plainfield (Walker's Grove), owe their beginnings to the Rev. Jesse Walker, the pioneer preacher, and they carry on the evangelism he so faithfully began in this Old Northwest wilderness. Probably no Methodist Church in American Methodism has had so fruitful a history as the one Jesse Walker started in Chicago. From 1831 this church has been in existence in Chicago; it has grown with the city sending forth a constant stream of Christian influence in the "Windy City."

Field gives this account of the closing of Jesse Walker's

religious career:

...Brother Walker had had his eye on Chicago from 1825. In that time only one other man, S. R. Beggs, had shared the charge of the new field. He had hoped and longed for the day that had now come; and when Chicago Methodism was placed on a sure foundation, and John T. Mitchell had been secured as the pastor, the faithful pioneer, after thirty-two years of constant labor, at the age of sixty-eight, at the Conference of 1834, took a superannuate relation, and settled down quietly on his farm on the Des Plaines. Here he entertained the travelers that passed his way, did a little farming, sold milk in the city, and in these quiet ways strove to earn a living for the short time yet allotted him on earth. His step-daughter says, while here he never omitted family prayers morning and night, no matter who might be stopping with him. He was greatly loved by the Indians, and sometimes gave them the last food in the house.

He remained at this place for a year. When his Conference was in session in Springfield in 1835, he passed from earth on Sunday, October 5th. William See was at Root River (now Racine, Wis.) in 1836, and as he disappeared from our notice in 1834, he may have gone to Racine that year. Edmund Weed, one of Jesse Walker's old Plainfield members, was also at Racine with William See. It was probably these families that are referred to in the following notices. It will very likely appear, when the history is written, that Jesse Walker was the first preacher at Racine, and perhaps formed the first class there. The following incident will give us some facts in the case, as well as explain how Brother Walker came to his death: John Sinclair went on to the Chicago District in the fall of 1833, and left in the fall of 1835; so that this incident must have occurred some time during those two years. John Sinclair came to Illinois at an early day; but he says that through all the years in the new country, he was never permitted to reach a new neighborhood ahead of any Methodist preacher. At length he received word that a few families had settled on Root River, Wisconsin,

and he felt that his opportunity had come for going to one place heretofore unexplored. He lived on his farm near Ottawa, Illinois. He set out on a trip to Root River to visit the new settlement. On his way, he called at Jesse Walker's house. After greetings were over, Brother Walker remarked that he was very tired, as he had just returned from Root River, where he had been to establish an appointment. John Sinclair said he then gave up the attempt of being first.

By 1835, there must have been quite a settlement around Racine; for we are led to the following sad recital: "The cause of his death was a severe cold he took on his way to camp-meeting. In crossing Root River, he found the water deeper than he had calculated on. He got very wet, took cold, and died in about six weeks.

"His last moments were such as might be expected from his long and laborious life in the way of doing good. To a ministerial brother who visited him shortly before his death, he said that God had been with him from the time of his conversion, and was still with him. His last moments were tranquil, and he died in full and confident hope of a blessed immortality....(101)

Before we lay Jesse Walker to rest though let's go back and see a little more of the last years of his life. The Des Plaines River was then called the Aux Plain. His land lay on both sides of the river. Grand Avenue in Chicago crossed the river on his land. At that time there was no bridge over the river. Jesse operated a ferry, using two Indian canoes with a platform on them, to carry people, horses, and other vehicles across the river. Later he had a bridge built across the river. It had a span of 200 feet and was roughly constructed, but it was a vast improvement over what had been there before. Later on two other bridges were built too, one a draw-bridge which lifted up from the center. Later too when the Chicago and Galena Railroad was built it crossed the Jesse Walker land. Mrs. Gorin says they lived near "the town of Caznovia, north of Oak Park." It is also told that Jesse had a dream to establish a town on his farm to be named "Sionilli," Illinois spelled in reverse. It is recorded on the word of Mrs. Gorin again that a Josiah

Blodgett finished burning a kiln of 100,000 bricks on the night that Jesse died. These bricks were to be used to build a hotel. I don't know if this is true.

As I have already cited from Field's account the Walkers were known for their entertaining and good will to travelers. They, more or less, kept a tavern, as William See had done. Jesse also farmed a little and sold milk in Chicago. Mrs. Gorin relates the following narrative of some of their experiences with the Indians of this area:

There were any amount of Indians in and around Chicago. On one occasion I saw over 500 in one body. They came to Chicago to have a dance on their dancing ground, which was about a half mile west of the lake shore. The white people went out to see them dance and gave them presents. We had got word about the approach of the Indians, but when they came we were nearly frightened into fits. They came to our house expecting to see Father Walker, but he had gone away forty miles distant with Mother to get a load of provision. They were much disappointed that he was not at home. We had just finished getting dinner when the Indians came. We all ran away and when we came back we found the Indians had eaten every bit of our dinner and they even took the pendulum off the clock. It was brass, and bright things always attract Indians. They took some of the knives and spoons and forks. It was so strange, for they have no use for forks. Father Walker said, when he returned, that if he had been there he would have killed an ox and given them a barbecue. We had a little girl with us, half Indian and half French, named Monique Muller. When the old Indian, Robertson, her uncle, gave her to Father Walker, he requested him to raise her as a white child. When the Indians came she was as badly frightened as we were, but the invaders were quiet people and did no injury to anyone. They made the journey every fall and always took everything before them.(102)

Mrs. Gorin also tells of Father Walker finding Tabitha

Wentworth crying at the class room door because she couldn't get in to class. She also tells too: "It was told by the Indians that Lake Michigan would rise seven years and fall seven years. When we came away in 1838 the lake was rising and they had to use stepping stones on Lake Street. I don't remember whether the people were frightened or not, but the water washed away the sand bar on which George E. Walker (a nephew of Jesse Walker) and Jim Kinzie had storehouses. The rise of the water ruined both men financially."(103)

Commenting on the styles of 1833, Mrs. Gorin says: "...then we wore padded puffs inside our sleeves. We took two yards of material and folded it cornerwise and cut off the corners to make it the right shape, and put it all in the puff. Afterward the fashion changed from big puffs to ruffles."(104) Well, maybe the above is trivia, but I thought some of it too interesting to exclude. Afterall, we are trying to learn of Jesse's life and times and I think that these little personal things make the story that much more interesting to read.

Pennewell points out that Jesse Walker could have written a book entitled, "The Rivers I Have Known." This is because he was constantly crossing/fording rivers throughout his long and colorful missionary career. He had crossed and re-crossed most of the major and minor rivers of the Midwest and some in the south and east. The list includes: the Cumberland, the Tennessee, the Green, the Kentucky, the Wabash, the White, the Black, the St. Francis, the Vermillion, Sangamon, Illinois, Kankakee, Du Page, Des Plaines, and Chicago, the Allegheny, the Potomac, the Ohio, the Missouri, and the mighty Mississippi. The latter three he must have crossed a great many times. He crossed all of these rivers without a bridge, save one, the Des Plaines, and the bridge over that one he had built himself. I have related before that he often swam his horse across these rivers, forded streams, and, if one was available, took a ferry across. That is why it is so ironic that Jesse would catch a cold crossing one last river in Wisconsin, the Root River. As Pennewell puts it, "...then the final crossing, the 'Jordan River,' to lay his burden down."(105)

Jesse Walker's tombstone says he died October 4, 1835. Field says the date was Sunday, October 5, 1835, while the Annual Conference was in session. The calendar for the year

1835 shows that October 5th was on a Monday. It would appear then that the date of his death would be Sunday, October 4, 1835. He died at his home in Leyden Township, in Cook County, Illinois, at the ripe old age, for that time, of sixty-nine. Field says:

He was buried near his home; but when the Rock River Conference was in session at Plainfield, in 1850, his remains were removed to the cemetery of that place and reinterred. The members of the Conference--the present writer in the company--gathered around the new tomb to look upon the remains, which had already been decaying for about fifteen years. A. E. Phelps, Isaac Scarritt, and John Sinclair spoke tender words of recollection, and then the body was covered once more, to rest till the last trump! A neat monument stands over his grave, to mark the last resting-place of this pioneer preacher without a peer.(106)

The Hon. George H. Woodruff's 1878 book, **The History of Will County, Illinois**, incorrectly states:

...Father Walker died at Plainfield, in 1835, at the ripe age of 69. At a meeting of the Rock River Conference, at Plainfield, in 1850, his remains were removed from the old cemetery to the new one, and a monument placed over them with this inscription: 'At the Rock River Conference, in 1850, his remains were removed to this place by his sons in the Gospel, who erect this stone to transmit his revered name to coming generations....(107)

Pennewell gives us the following account of Jesse's burial and reinterment:

...He was buried near his home, later to be removed to Plainfield. In 1850 the Rock River Conference met at Plainfield, Walker's old home, and the burial place of his first wife, Susannah. On motion of S. R. Beggs, a committee was appointed to effect the transfer of Walker's remains to the new cemetery at Plainfield. The

committee was Phelps, Batchelor, Worthington and Beggs....(108)

I found another account of this in Alice Graves Browne's paper entitled, "Notes on the Early History of Plainfield," written in October of 1926. It states:

...From 1806 until 1835 when he died, his life was devoted to the spread of Methodism in Illinois, and he was a prominent figure in its history. He made Plainfield his home for a few years before his death, and his body lies in the Plainfield cemetery where a suitable monument has been erected to his memory. A bronze tablet upon it, bears the following record of his deeds: 'This monument was erected by Methodists North and South, and was dedicated by the Rock River conference assembled in Joliet, Sept. 27, 1911, in memory of Jesse Walker, 1766-1835

Susannah, his wife, 1757-1832.'....(109)

I would like to add a couple more paragraphs by Alice Graves Browne because they relate, I think, to our discussion of Jesse Walker. She states:

...He was the Daniel Boone of Methodism and laid the foundation of the church in Illinois and Missouri. He was the first presiding elder of the district known as Illinois, and afterwards of Methodism in the city of St. Louis. He was the first Methodist minister to enter the bounds of the Rock River conference and as Superintendent of the Chicago mission inaugurated the first Methodist service in Chicago, in company with the Rev. Stephen R. Beggs, June 15, 1831.

At a session of the Rock River conference held in Plainfield, Illinois, 1850, his remains were borne to this place from a pioneer cemetery one mile southwest, by his sons in the gospel....(110)

Pennewell further states about what happened later in regard to commemorating Walker:



**The author studying Jesse Walker's grave site marker in the Plainfield Cemetery. This stone is located just off Highway 59.**

REV. S. R. BEGGS

1801 — 1885

ELIZABETH H. BEGGS

1813 — 1865

MARY E. BEGGS

1832 — 1865

BEGBGS



**The Beggs's Grave --** The Rev. Stephen Beggs was a Methodist minister who rode circuit in the same area as Jesse Walker. He was also an early settler to this area and assisted Walker in the work of the Methodist Church. This stone marks the burial place of Mr. and Mrs. Beggs and their daughter, Mary E. Beggs. They are buried right next to the Walkers.

...The Rock River Conference met in Joliet, Illinois, a few miles from Plainfield, in 1911. Plans had previously been carried out by the Methodists of Illinois and Missouri to provide a more suitable stone to mark Jesse Walker's last resting place. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was represented by Bishop E. R. Hendrix and the Methodist Episcopal Church by Bishop John W. Hamilton. The Conference adjourned and made a pilgrimage to the Walker's graves and engaged in an impressive ceremony of dedication, Bishop Hendrix making the principal address....(111)

Pennewell states that he was present at this ceremony and it was here that he first learned of the pioneer preacher, Jesse Walker, and was then inspired to research and write about this great man of God. He wrote his book, **A Voice in the Wilderness**, he says, after twenty years of interest and research.

As you can see from the various preceding accounts about Jesse-Walker's death, burial, and reinterment, there is some discrepancy. Generally, the sources agree, but doubt is raised and some questions do remain unanswered.

This past autumn while researching and writing this paper on the Rev. Jesse Walker, I went out to the Plainfield Cemetery to see Jesse Walker's grave site and to see for myself what was written on the plaque on the monument dedicated to him. It reads:

This Monument  
Was Erected By Methodists North and  
South, and Was Dedicated By the Rock  
River Conference Assembled in Joliet  
September Twenty-Seventh, Nineteen  
Hundred Eleven, In Memory of  
Jesse Walker  
1766-1835  
Susannah, His Wife  
1757-1832

He was the Daniel Boone of Methodism,  
And Laid the Foundation of the Church in

Illinois and Missouri. He was the first presiding  
Elder of the District Known as  
Illinois and afterwards of the District  
Known as Missouri, And Was Conspicuous  
As the Founder of Methodism in the City  
of St. Louis

He Was the first Methodist Minister to  
Enter the Bounds of the Rock River Conference  
And As Superintendent of the Chicago Mission,

Inaugurated the First Methodist Services  
in Chicago, In Company with the Rev.

Stephen R. Beggs on June 15, 1831.

At a Session of Rock River Conference  
Held in Plainfield, Ill. A.D. 1850, His Remains  
Were Borne to this place From a Pioneer  
Cemetery One Mile Southwest EY His Sons  
In the Gospel.

This concludes my story of the life of the pioneer preacher, the Rev. Jesse Walker, and his times, but before we leave him to eternity let me make a few last comments in tribute to his christian character and deeds here on earth. He is described to us as "...a man 5 feet 7 inches tall, vigorous frame, sallow complexion, light hair and small blue eyes, prominent cheek bones, a generous and cheerful expression. He was a plain man who dressed in drab colored clothes of the plainest Quaker fashion, woolen pants, coat, and vest,....He wore a large white cravat at his uncollared neck, and his head was covered with a light colored beaver hat, 'nearly as large as a lady's umbrella.'..."(112) He is said to have been rather sturdy and that he walked with a firm reliance, verging on a swagger. He was a man of faith and self-assurance.

He must have been physically, as well as spiritually, strong to endure the many hardships that he faced during his long career. He was capable of extreme hunger and unlimited exertion; no journey was too long or too hard to deter him in his way. He made his way to his objective through forest, swamp, and prairie. If there was a road or path he would follow it, if not, he would set his own course and forge ahead. If his horse could not carry him any longer, he would proceed on foot

leading his horse. He slept where night found him; he made his way through all kinds of weather, i.e., storms, rain, snow, ice, wind, hot and cold. He constantly made his appointed rounds. He would never disappoint a pioneer soul, at least, not intentionally.

Jesse Walker was an extraordinary man. In spite of his little formal schooling, about twenty days, he was intelligent and apt in the university of life. He was in tune with the natural world, always, and he knew the ways of men and animals, the rhythm of the seasons, the differences of the weather, the wondrous processes of nature, from an intimate life-long fellowship with his fellow creatures, human and otherwise, and the forests, fields, and streams. Like his Indian friends, he knew much about nature lore and used it to his best advantage. He bore himself with pride, simplicity, assurance, and grace.

Walker was not a typical man of the West, but he knew the others at first-hand, i.e., the uneducated, the aggressive and self-reliant, the woodmen, boatmen, hunters, farmers, story tellers, braggarts, the rough and ready. He fit in well with these people, because he had grown up with them. He worked with them, traveled with them, labored with them to earn a living, and struggled to save their souls. He knew the common, the rich, and the in-between. He knew the church people from the class leaders, local preachers, circuit riders, to the presiding elders and the bishops. He was himself and at home with all men. He had a ready tongue to tell stories in the vernacular; he had a bag full of interesting stories and incidents. His manner was easy, almost suave, in front of a group of listeners; he was entertaining and sure of himself. He almost reminds me of one of the stories they tell of Abe Lincoln; their backgrounds were very similar when you think about it. He wrote very little, read some, thought much, and worked incessantly. He met strangers with ease and won their respect quickly. He was at home in life, moved about easily and with interest, enthusiasm, and integrity. As a preacher he was not eloquent, but he did get the job done. He spoke with force, conviction, and vividness. He gave men hell, heaven, himself, and Christ. They never forgot him for it; we shouldn't either.

Appendices  
Appendix I  
CHRONOLOGY  
of the Life of  
The Reverend Jesse Walker

1766 Born June 9, 1766 in Buckingham County, Virginia.  
1780 Joined the Methodist Church on July, 1786.  
1788 Married Susannah Webley in Virginia.  
1789 Moved to North Carolina.  
1796 Moved to Tennessee.  
1802-03 Received on trial in the Western Conference.  
Appointed to Red River Circuit, (Virginia-Tennessee)  
1803-04 Appointed to the Livingston Circuit.  
Livingston and Hartford.  
1805 Reappointed to Livingston, Hartford added.  
1806 Accompanied William McKendree, Presiding Elder,  
to "spy out" Illinois. (on horseback)  
1807 Held first watch meeting in Illinois. In April held  
camp meeting near Edwardsville; in the summer  
held camp meeting near Shiloh.  
Appointed to Missouri Circuit.  
1808 Appointed to Illinois Circuit.  
1809 Appointed to Cape Girardeau Circuit, Missouri.  
1810 Appointed to Cape Girardeau Circuit, Missouri.  
1811 Appointed to Illinois Circuit.  
1812-16 Presiding Elder on Illinois District.  
1816-19 Presiding Elder on Missouri District.  
1819 Appointed Missionary at Large for Missouri  
Conference.  
1820 Missionary work in St. Louis.  
1821 Appointed to St. Louis.  
1822 Annual Conference held in St. Louis.  
Appointed Missouri Conference Missionary.  
1823 Elected delegate to General Conference at  
Baltimore, Maryland.  
1824 Traveled to Baltimore on horseback, accompanied by  
Thomas A. Morris; went to see John C. Calhoun,  
Secretary of War, in Washington, D.C., in regard to  
establishing an Indian school.

Reappointed to Indian Mission; open school at Fort Clark (Peoria) with six Indian children.  
Delegate to General Conference.

1825      Established an Indian Mission at the mouth of the Fox River.  
            Formed a class at Peoria.  
            Made a trip to Chicago with John Hamlin and probably preached the first sermon there.  
            Removed Mission on mouth of Fox River twenty miles upstream on the east side.

1826      Joined at the Mission by his son-in-law, James Walker, son of his brother, who had married Jane Walker, his daughter.

1827-28    James Walker moved to Walker's Grove (Plainfield).  
1828      Jesse Walker was appointed to the Peoria Circuit, extending to Chicago.  
            Superintendent of the Fox River Mission; Peter Cartwright, Presiding Elder.

1829      Established Mission to Indians and white settlers at Walker's Grove (Plainfield).  
            Appointed to Fox River Mission which extended from Sandy Creek to Chicago.  
            Settled at Plainfield.  
            Enrolled First Church Class in bounds of Rock River Conference at Plainfield--Twelve members from Old Cabin Settlers of 1823 and later.

1830      Reported 75 members.  
            Appointed to Chicago Mission. Visited Kickapoo and Pottawatomie Indians on Grand Prairie.  
            Clerk of election at Chicago.

1831      Appointed by County Commissioners to buy land for city use. Performed two marriages in Chicago.  
            In June held camp meeting at Plainfield, assisted by S. R. Beggs, Isaac Scarrett, and William See.  
            Walker, Beggs, and See went to Chicago. A class was organized with William See class leader, Jesse Walker was preacher in charge.  
            Appointed to DePlane Circuit, including territory outside of Chicago Circuit.

1832      Appointed Presiding Elder to Chicago District and

preacher at the DesPlaines Mission.

After the death of Mrs. Walker, he lived alone in a log house between Randolph and Washington Streets.

1833 First Temperance Meeting in Plainfield.  
Appointed to Chicago. In July he married again, and settled on the DesPlaines River near Grand Avenue.

1834 Built a church, 26 x 38', at North Water and Clark Streets. Reported 25 members and one church building.  
Superannuated, retired to his farm on the DesPlaines.

1835 He died at his home on the DesPlaines on October 4th or 5th.

1850 His body was reinterred at the Plainfield Cemetery in Plainfield, Illinois.

1911 The Rock River Conference met at Joliet, Illinois, for plans had previously been carried out by the Methodists of Illinois and Missouri to provide a more suitable stone to mark Jesse Walker's last resting place.  
This concluded the life and doings of the pioneer preacher.

## Appendix II

I missed one phase of Jesse Walker's life in my narrative, so I would like to include it here now. It concerns the period when he was in Peoria County and also involves his contact with the character, "Black Bob", with whom I've been intrigued for a long time. There has never been too much known about this interpreter and I hope that I can shed some new light on him now in this paper.

Jesse Walker's energy and character made him a natural leader in the new emerging communities that he came to. This was true of the time that he spent in and around Fort Clark (Peoria). In 1825 he was on the Petit Jury of Peoria County. The Assessor of Peoria County in the same year reported that Jesse was possessed of personal properties in the amount of \$50.00. This must have been the value of his own personal effects for at this time there was no such thing as a real estate tax in Peoria County. His house on the Fox River was the first polling place in northern Illinois. The Fox River Precinct was created on March 8, 1826. The order read as follows: "All general and special elections shall be held at the home of Jesse Walker, near the junction of the Illinois and Fox Rivers." Jesse Walker, Aaron Hawley, and Henry Allen were the Judges of Election in 1826 in this precinct. In 1826 Jesse was also on a committee to locate a road from Peoria to the mouth of the Fox River.(113)

The Peoria County Commissioners, on June 6, 1826, passed the following order: "Ordered that a license be granted Jesse Walker to keep a ferry across the Illinois River at the mouth of the Fox River and that he be allowed to charge the same rate as those allowed John L. Bogardus at his (Peoria) ferry." Another man by the name of Crozier tried to get a license at the same point, but after hearing his plea, the commissioners judged "the proprietorship to be in Jesse Walker." It is also a matter of record that Walker received the sum of one dollar for acting as election clerk in 1830, and \$16.00 for carrying Chicago election returns to Peoria.(114)

In a book entitled, Johnson's **History of Peoria County**, it tells of a season when the settlers were faced with starvation. News of their plight reached citizens of Sangamon County who sent word to settlers in Peoria County that they would supply

food if it was sent for. "Jesse Walker undertook the relief expedition in person, obtaining a keelboat(115) and securing Josiah Fulton as pilot, proceeded to the point named, where the boat was loaded as the pioneers of Sangamon County had promised. They returned to Peoria and through the importunity of Walker, they went on up the river as far as Starved Rock, where the cargo was landed. It arrived just in time to do most good. Josiah Fulton, the pilot, returned to Peoria by canoe." This history continues, by saying, "This was not the only instance of Jesse Walker's interest in suffering, hungry pioneers. His name and good deeds were enshrined in the hearts of the pioneers and transmitted to posterity. Blessed be the name and memory of Jesse Walker."(116)

Almer Pennewell, in his book, **A Voice In the Wilderness**, says after extended research he found a book entitled, **Reconteur**, written by N. Watson and printed in 1882. He used the help of the Congressional Library in Washington, D. C. and was able to locate this book in the Ayers Indian Collection in the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois. This book, he says, contains four short stories of the pioneer days, one of which prominently involved Jesse Walker, indicating his prominence in the new community of Peoria County, which later became LaSalle County. In the book, **Reconteur**, Walker is described as a "short, thick, heavy set man, dark skinned, straight-breasted drab coat, broad brimmed white beaver hat. He walked erect, with pompous bearing, rode a fine horse with saddle bags filled with trinkets. He was not educated, but possessed strong, insitinctive faculties, energy and force of character. His beneficent acts are rememberd by the early settlers. He traveled and preached while the mission school went on. Bold and undaunted, he made proselytes wherever he went. He had great faith in the Indians. He tried to convert Shabbona, but failed. Pokee and his squaw, Yawdo, were among his first converts. He immersed his converts, mostly women and children, and made them wear a badge. His interpreters at various times were George Forqua (sometimes written and pronounced, Furkee), a half-breed; Black Bob, a negro, and Mike Girty."

This story goes on to tell us, that Jesse Walker built the first house on the present site of Ottawa, Illinois, and that his Salem

Mission consisted of a chapel, schoolhouse, and a few buildings occupied by the employees of the Mission. It then goes on to say:

In 1829 Walker, accompanied by Beggs, entered an Indian village on the Big Vermillion River near Streator. They were met by "Black Bob," a runaway slave from Kentucky, who had married a squaw and raised a family. He had preached among the Indians before meeting Walker. The day after Beggs and Walker arrived in camp, Walker preached and "Black Bob" interpreted. There was one little side event which Walker and Beggs had not noticed. When they entered the village a man ran out of the village in another direction. This man's name was Mason. He had behind him a long list of crimes and had taken refuge among the Indians from justice. He posed and dressed and spoke as an Indian. But there was a certain element of his speech which betrayed him to observing white people.

In 1825 Daniel Singleton, a Virginian whose wife was a Methodist, had moved from Ohio to Indiana and thence to Illinois. He arrived at a point opposite the mouth of the Fox River, where Jesse Walker and his family lived. Enos Pembroke and Thomas R. Covell, with their families, lived in tents nearby. Singleton was guided by a half-breed who said he had visited this spot the previous year and found no one there. On Sunday Walker preached to the four families, comparing Singleton's wilderness journey to the journeying of the Israelites to the promised land.

Singleton later scouted the country and finally located at Buffalo Rock, two miles above Starved Rock. Walker frequently visited them there and was a welcomed guest in their wilderness home. The Singletons were fine people and a valuable asset to the new community.

There were two children in the Singleton family-- Ralph, a foster son, and Maude, their own daughter. These two young people, with two half-breed Indians, were converted at a meeting Walker held in a grove near Singleton's home. Maude and her foster brother had

grown up together, and in due time fell in love with each other and planned to be married. They asked Walker to secure a marriage license for them, which could only be secured at Peoria. He was delayed in Peoria six days by the absence of the County Clerk. Meanwhile, the young lovers anxiously awaited his return.

Yawdo, an Indian squaw, one of Walker's converts and a friend of Singleton's, came and warned the Singletons that Mason, the desperado who had fled from the Indian camp on the Vermillion River and located in this vicinity, was in love with Maude and that he planned to kidnap her and carry her away to unknown parts. One day when Maude went out to the spring for water, Mason, who was hidden in ambush, seized her and was off with her before the alarm could reach the neighbors. A posse was formed and pursuit made until the young woman, unharmed, was rescued. Walker returned and married Ralph and Maude. Eventually, the Singletons found life in those regions too wild and moved back to Indiana.(117)

It is also told in this story that Jesse Walker had trouble with "Black Bob" and that the Indians had a strong tendency to religious excesses and frenzy. When these wild spells came upon them, Jesse would just up and abandon them to their excesses. An early British traveler in these parts of Illinois says that frenzy was not only confined to the Indians. He told of visiting a class meeting where all of the people stood and rejoiced, joined hands and waltzed around like dancing, then sat down and one after the other would say, "I feel it!," meaning, I guess, the power of God. This was then followed by convulsive motions until they all began to fall to the floor as if possessed. Some of them lost their powers of speech; some of the more rapturous members engaged in conduct that was far from exemplary behavior. Who says the white's religion had anything on the Red man's?

### Appendix III

I would like to include here one or two last tributes to the Rev. Jesse Walker. Governor John Reynolds, who was a personal friend of Walker's, said in a book, **My Own Times**,:

Jesse Walker was undaunted, a kind of Martin Luther patriarch of the Church of the West, and bore the standard of the Cross triumphantly throughout the wilderness country, as well to the red man as to the white. The intelligent public counted Jesse Walker one of the most efficient and useful pioneer preachers that ever labored in the west. Mr. Walker was a short, well set man, walked erect, and was possessed of great firmness, energy and perseverance; his complexion was sallow and his countenance gave unerring evidence that he was a sound and profound thinker; his eyes were blue, small and piercing. He was not a profound scholar, but he studied human nature and the Scriptures until he was enabled to propagate the Gospel with more success in a new country than nine-tenths of college educated gentry of the present day.(118)

Jesse Walker never gave up. He never asked for praise, or a crown of honor. He only asked to serve his God and save the souls of his fellow men and women. Bishop McKendree said of him, "Brother Walker never complained." His life was devoted to the growing fringe of society. He sowed the seed of God by many waters; he turned the wilderness into a garden. He strewed far and wide the seed of the future; future men and women, future homes and businesses, future conquests and victories, future towns and cities, future roads and highways, and future churches and colleges. He built a kingdom here on one piece of earth. He rides on in the far flung and throbbing life of the Mississippi River Valley. He lives and moves, his spirit at least, in this great mid-western civilization. His work goes on and on.(119)

Appendix IV  
THE CENTENNIAL  
E. E. Wood  
Field Secretary, Chicago  
Historic Society

In featuring the Plainfield ("Walker's Grove") Centennial this year with a week's program, from August 5th to August 12th, including two Sundays, especial prominence is given to the history of the early missionary work here among the Indians and pioneer traders and settlers. Two outstanding characters in the days of the circuit-rider and covered wagon are Rev. Jesse Walker and Rev. Stephen R. Beggs. These great and devout men enrolled the first church classes and preached the first sermons in the bounds of the Rock River Conference, which then included a vast territory.

The town of Plainfield holds just claim to the title of "Mother of Chicago," and Fort Beggs with its cabin may truly be called the "Cradle of Methodism" in the Northwest.

Along with the current celebration is planned a campaign to suitably memorialize the memory of Rev. Jesse Walker; through added improvements to the present Methodist Church structure; the marking or the restoration of Fort Beggs on its site at "Walker's Grove" as the Mecca of Rock River Methodism, and the preservation of the existing old United States Stage-house, as an historic museum and adjunct of the newly completed Community House.

The assembling at this time of the thousands who must feel that they each and all have a personal part in these plans will in itself constitute an epoch in the civil, military and religious history of the State and the entire Northwest.(120)

Appendix V  
TRAVELER'S HOMEWARD JOURNEY  
By Mrs. Alice Everette Davis  
Great Grand-daughter of Jesse  
Walker

What theme is so often sung and yet so exhaustless? What poet has not been inspired when his lyre had been strung to the notes of "Home, Sweet Home"?

There the holiest and purest affections of our natures cluster and entwine; there we find peace and rest when we have grown weary of the world's fierce strife and sick at heart with its vain commotions. Friends, true and tried, gather round its altar, making the very atmosphere around the hearthstone a sacred presence. Malice and envy dare not enter there, but stand aloff, forbidden guests.

The weary traveler, as he is tossed upon the restless, surging deep seas, thinks he is fast approaching the dim land of shadows, that he must soon be borne across the dim land of shadows, and no hope being left that his home will ever appear to his earthly vision again, cries out in agony of spirit, "Bury me not in the deep, deep sea." He ever finds consolation in being assured that when the pale drapery of death shall be about him that he shall be buried in the shadow of his favorite tree, and his ashes be mourned by those near and dear to him, by the ties of kindred and affection.

Our homes are dear to us all. But only types of a home brighter and dearer than we ever can imagine--"A house not made with hands; eternal in the heavens."

Who has not looked with glowing eyes upon all the glorious heavens as the sun sank to rest on its pillow of crimson clouds, and did not almost imagine it to be the opening door to that beautiful home of rest, that land of promise where angels' harps are ever tuned to strains of melody, and where hymnings are continually of "Home, Sweet Home"? (121)

Appendix VI  
PLAINFIELD IS CENTURY OLD  
By Ethel McCucheon-Wheat  
In Chicago Daily Drovers Journal

Father Jesse Walker was Plainfield's first settler (1823). On the removal of his bones from the old pioneer burying ground a concourse of 52 Methodist ministers, North and South, came to do honor to the memory of this Daniel Boone of Methodism. With the circuit rider, Father Beggs, as his scattered people lovingly called him, Jesse Walker held the first religious services in Chicago. This followed the days of the "class" and the picturesque and significant baptism of Indians and Spanish trappers in the DuPage river, an echo of those baptisms of old.

Across the river from the cabins of the Walkers, Clarks and Covels, earliest settlers, the Pottawattamie Indians farmed. Pioneer farming was a simple matter. A cleft in the sod with a settler's sturdy ax, a few precious grains placed therein, and that was the corn crop of the '30's.' Later, broken ground was harrowed with a thorn-apple branch.

The boundaries that are now the great industries of Canton, Ohio, had their beginning here. From Plainfield the farmers of this region had their first steel plow point and steel nail.

Plainfield's claim to being "Mother of Chicago" is firmly upheld by historians. As a matter of fact, Chicago depended upon Plainfield settlement for mail and supplies for years before she became a lusty youngster, able to look after herself. From the banks of the DuPage, Reuben Flagg hauled lumber for the first clap-boarded house in Chicago. Betsy, his wife, was the mother of the first white child born in the broad area of what was then Will County.

In the peaceful old cemetery a monument has been erected to Reuben Flagg and Betsy, his wife, a reproduction of their cabin home, with its marks of savage warfare upon the roof and the latch-string hanging out, typifying the pioneer spirit of hospitality that was as broad as the Illinois prairies.

Upon the old Woods homestead stands the old coach house, where the stage drew up, with a flourish of the whip over the backs of the leaders. Perhaps there descended--Judge Caton, dignified Chicago judiciary, and founder of Caton Farm. The old plank road was laid in 1851.(122)



**Samantha E. Flagg** was the first white child born in Will County. Her parents, the Reuben Flaggs, were among the first settlers of Walker's Grove [now Plainfield]. They are also buried in the Plainfield Cemetery. Their marker is unique since it is in the form of an early settler's cabin.



**Plainfield House or Halfway House -- 506 Main St., [Route 126] Plainfield --** The home, still in use as a residence, is marked as an historical site by both the Illinois and Will County Historical Societies. It was a rest stop on the Stagecoach Service from Chicago to Ottawa which began in 1834. It also served as a Government Post Office for a while. It is one of Plainfield's outstanding historical sites.



**This arrow head was found some years ago when workmen were doing some repairs to Plainfield's Halfway House. It was just recently given to the Will County Bicentennial Committee and was buried in the vault with the other items to be opened in a hundred years, 2076, at the park being built in Joliet. An interesting historical artifact and story.**

Appendix VII  
THE CALL OF THE DUPAGE  
By Edith McCutcheon Wheat  
(Dedicated by the Author to Plainfield Centennial)

All along the placid river,  
Where the plumed grasses shiver,  
Bend and bow upon the breezes  
In a happy rhythmic sway.

There's a cadence, rising, falling,  
Sharp, sweet notes of wild birds calling,  
And the song the summer leaves sing  
To the river on its way.

In a bend the village slumbers,  
Near the fisherman, in numbers,  
Watchful, silent and contented,  
Stand hip deep in surge and spray.  
On and past them hastes the river,  
Where the rushes shake and quiver,  
As the current bends against them  
As it goes upon its way.

High above the river's flowing  
Fleecy cloud galleons going,  
Sailing softly, hasting swiftly  
On some urgent voyage along.  
While the birds a-wing, done building,  
Summer joys with song are gilding,  
As the sunbeams tip the ripples,  
As the river flows along.

Here a field of wheat is greening,  
On the fence a robin's preening--  
Joys and warbles with the waters,  
Racing down their rocky way.  
Here a tent gleams through the tree boles,  
There are drying lines and fish poles,  
And the shrill of childish voices  
Greets the river on its way.

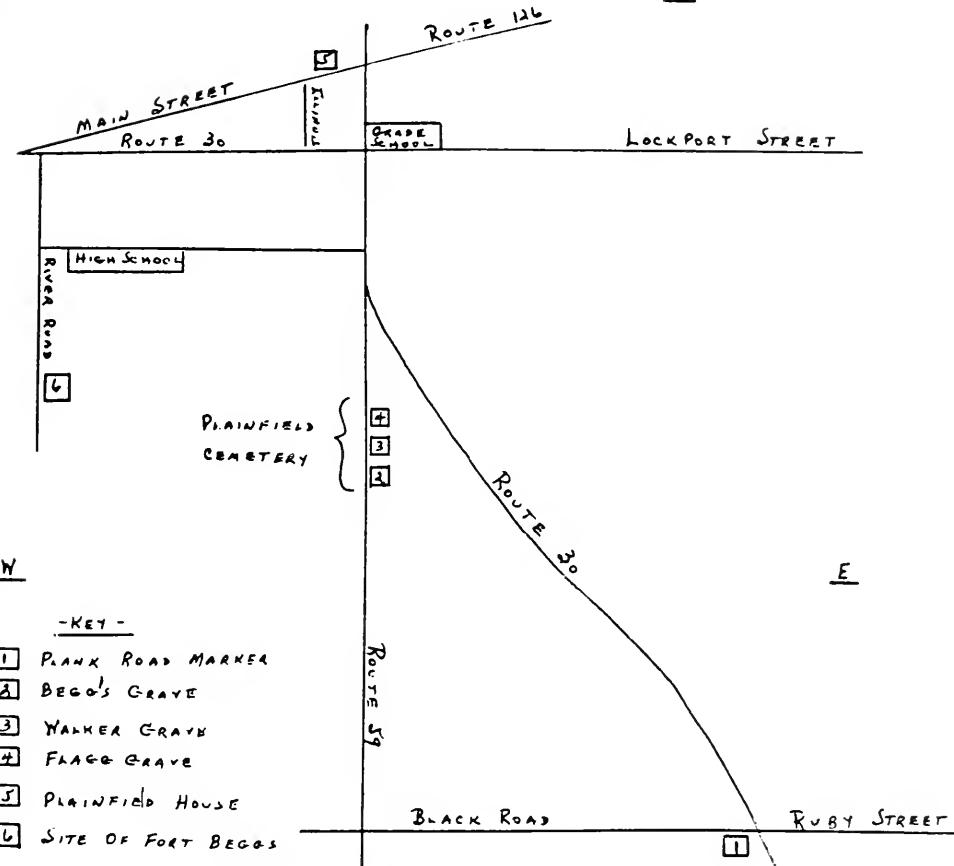
Where the banks rise high and steep,  
Summer houses fringe its sweep,  
Like the birds to nest returning

Still the heart of man is yearning,  
Harking to the bee and bird song,  
Harking to the leaf and wind song,  
Answering the call of waters  
Sweeping on their stately way.

Here the dam joins in the chorus  
While the summer winds sweep o'er us,  
Bearing scents of anchored lilies,

In a hidden bend and bay.  
Roars the dam, its great voice calling,  
(Silver sheets of water falling).  
Hark! the great voice of the river,  
Mighty giant in its sway.(123)

N



1. Plank Road Marker - this marker is at six corners in Joliet - Plainfield Rd. and Raynor Avenue. In order to eliminate muddy roads, wooden planks about eight feet long were laid on a graded highway. Such a road from Joliet to Plainfield, was opened on December 1, 1851.
2. Begg's Grave - The Rev. Stephen Beggs was a Methodist minister who rode circuit all the way to Ottawa. He was an early settler to this county. His grave is found in the Plainfield Cemetery near Route 59.
3. Walker's Grave - Rev. Jesse Walker was the county's first settler. He came to the Plainfield area (Walker's Grove) in 1829 as a Methodist minister and mission worker. His grave is near the Beggs' marker.
4. Reuben Flagg Grave - This burial monument is also found in the Plainfield Cemetery in the same section as Walker and Beggs' graves. It is easily seen since it is made in the form of a settler's cabin. His daughter, Samantha, was the first settler's child born in this county.
5. Plainfield House - 506 Main St. (Rte. 126) Plainfield - The home, still in use as a residence, is marked as an historical site by the Illinois Historical Society. This was a rest stop on the Stagecoach Service from Chicago to Ottawa which was inaguarated in 1834. First Government Post Office.
6. Fort Beggs - Plainfield, Rte. 30, West to James St. to South River Road - During the Black Hawk War, the Rev. Begg's home was converted into an impromptu fort. For four days, 125 persons huddled into the fort until aid came. The people were then taken to Ft. Dearborn for protection.

Wisconsin Boundary

Northeastern Illinois  
in the 1830's

Trails and Roads



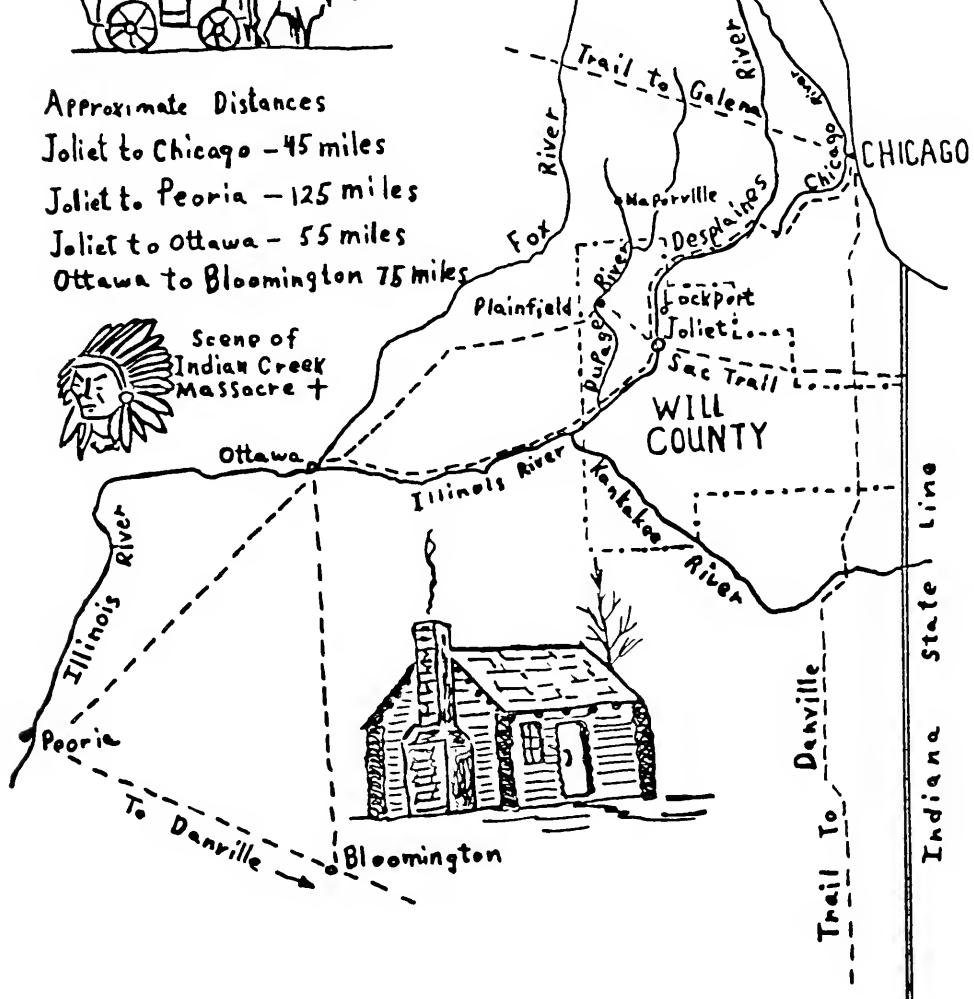
Approximate Distances

Joliet to Chicago - 45 miles

Joliet to Peoria - 125 miles

Joliet to Ottawa - 55 miles

Ottawa to Bloomington 75 miles



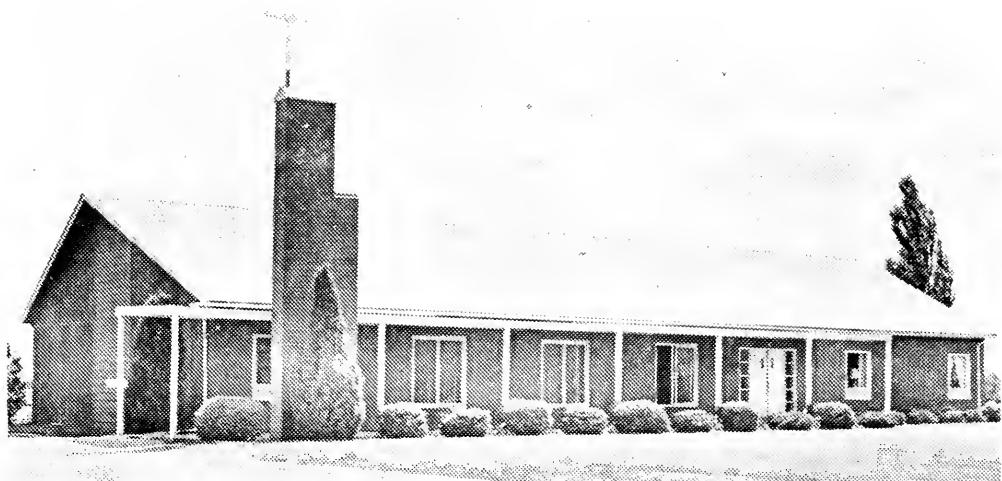
## Footnotes

1. Plainfield, Illinois Centennial Pamphlet, pp. 3-4.
2. Almer Pennewell, **A Voice in the Wilderness**, p. 14.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 15.
4. Rev. S. R. Beggs, **Pages from the Early History of the West**, pp. 134-137.
5. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 19.
6. Rev. A. D. Field, **Worthies and Workers both Ministers and Laymen of the Rock River Conference**, p. 55.
7. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 20.
8. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 55.
9. **Will County Bicentennial Commemorative Edition of the History of Will County, Ill.**, (hereafter to be cited as, the **Will County History**], p. 233.
10. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 56.
11. **Ibid.**, pp. 56-57.
12. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 23.
13. **Ibid.**, p. 25.
14. **Ibid.**, pp. 25-26.
15. **Ibid.**, pp. 26-27.
16. **Ibid.**
17. **Ibid.**, p. 28.
18. **Ibid.**, pp. 28-29.
19. **Ibid.**
20. **Ibid.**
21. **Ibid.**, p. 30.
22. **Ibid.**
23. **Ibid.**, p. 31.
24. **Ibid.**, pp. 35-36.
25. **Ibid.**
26. **Ibid.**
27. **Ibid.**, p. 37.
28. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 57.
29. **Will County History, Op. Cit.**, pp. 232-233.
30. Beggs, **Op. Cit.**, p. 137.
31. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 57.
32. Beggs, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 137-138.
33. **Ibid.**
34. **Ibid.**

35. **Ibid.**, p. 139.
36. **Ibid.**
37. **Ibid.**, p. 140
38. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 59.
39. **Ibid.**, pp. 59-60.
40. Beggs, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 140-141.
41. **Ibid.**, p. 142.
42. Pennewel, **Op. Cit.**, p. 52.
43. **Ibid.**, pp. 52-53.
44. **Ibid.**
45. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 61.
46. **Ibid.**
47. **Ibid.**, pp. 62-63.
48. **Ibid.**, pp. 63-64.
49. **Ibid.**
50. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 72.
51. **Ibid.**
52. **Ibid.**, pp. 72-73.
53. **Ibid.**, pp. 74-76.
54. **Ibid.**, pp. 80-81.
55. **Ibid.**, pp. 82-83.
56. **Ibid.**, pp. 84-85.
57. **Ibid.**, p. 96.
58. Field, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 65-67.
59. **Ibid.**, pp. 67-68.
60. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 108.
61. **Ibid.**, pp. 108-109
62. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 69.
63. **Ibid.**, p. 70.
64. **Ibid.**, pp. 70-71.
65. **Ibid.**
66. **Ibid.**, pp. 71-72.
67. Pennewell, **op. Cit.**, p. 112.
68. **Ibid.**, p. 113.
69. **Ibid.**
70. **Ibid.**
71. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 73.
72. **Ibid.**, pp. 73-74.
73. **Ibid.**, pp. 74-75.
74. **Ibid.**, p. 76.

75. **Ibid.**, p. 77.
76. **Ibid.**, p. 78.
77. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 134-139.
78. **Ibid.**
79. His (David Walker's) son, George E. Walker, Became the first sheriff of LaSalle County.
80. Field, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 78-80.
81. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 140-141.
82. Field, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 90-92.
83. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 132-133.
84. **Ibid.**, p. 143.
85. Beggs, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 161-162.
86. **Ibid.**, pp. 162-164.
87. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 143-144.
88. **Ibid.**, p. 145.
89. **Ibid.**, p. 146.
90. **Ibid.**, p. 147.
91. Mackinaw Boat--a flat-bottomed boat with a pointed bow and square stern, on which oars or sails, or both, could be used.
92. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 149.
93. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 94.
94. **Ibid.**, pp. 94-100.
95. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 164.
96. **Ibid.**, p. 166.
97. **Ibid.**, p. 167.
98. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 101.
99. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 174-175.
100. Field, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 103-104.
101. **Ibid.**, pp. 105-107.
102. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 179.
103. **Ibid.**, p. 180.
104. **Ibid.**
105. **Ibid.**, p. 182.
106. Field, **Op. Cit.**, p. 107.
107. **Will County History, Op. Cit.**, p. 234.
108. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, p. 182.
109. Browne, "Notes of the Early History of Plainfield," pp. 6-7.
110. **Ibid.**

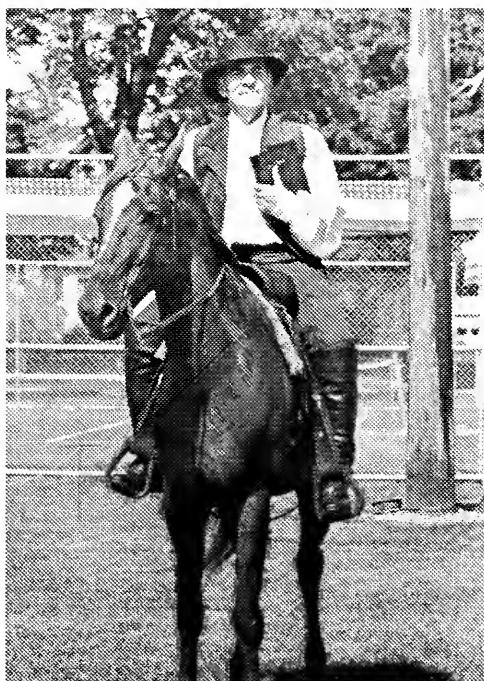
111. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 182-183.
112. **Ibid.**, p. 185.
113. **Ibid.**, pp. 150-151
114. **Ibid.**
115. Keelboat--a shallow, flat-bottomed boat with a keel.
116. Pennewell, **Op. Cit.**, pp. 151-152.
117. **Ibid.**, pp. 152-154.
118. **Ibid.**, p. 188.
119. **Ibid.**, p. 189.
120. Plainfield, Illinois Centennial Pamphlet, **Op. Cit.**, p. 6.
121. **Ibid.**, p. 8.
122. **Ibid.**, p. 9.
123. **Ibid.**, p. 13.



**Jesse Walker Methodist Church.** Erected in 1963 after being chartered in 1959. This church named for the Rev. Jesse Walker is situated on Caton Farm Road in Crystal Lawns.



**Above:** Rev. Glen Sutton posing as the Rev. Jesse Walker at Jesse Walker's grave in the Plainfield Cemetery in October of 1973. That same year Rev. Sutton played Jesse Walker on a Methodist church float in Plainfield High School's Homecoming parade. Right: Rev. Glen Sutton of the Jesse Walker United Methodist Church portrayed the area's first Circuit Riding Preacher,



Rev. Jesse Walker, during church services at Plainfield's Village Green Sunday morning, July 4, 1976 as part of our village's bicentennial activities and community's commemoration of this nation's great event.



## Bibliography

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Browne, Alice Graves, "Notes on the Early History of Plainfield, Illinois." Written and printed at Plainfield, Ill., October, 1926. (Not copyrighted!)

Field, Rev. A. D., **Worthies and Workers, Both Ministers and Laymen, of the Rock River Conference.** Cincinnati: Cranston & Curts, 1896.

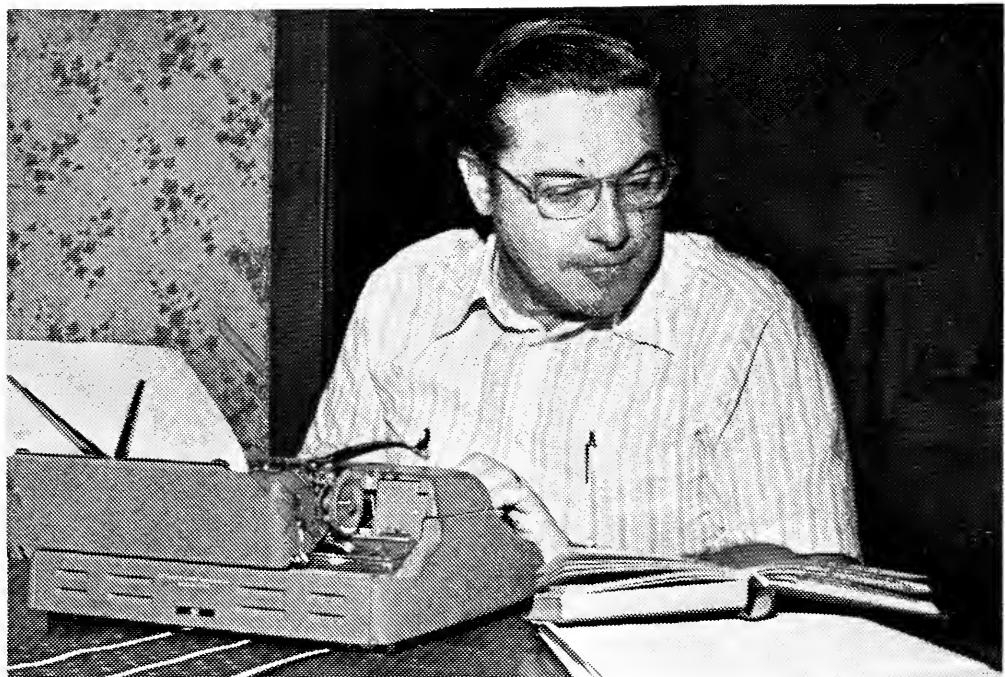
Hartong, Miles Victor, "The Historical Record of James Walker, Walker's Grove, and Walker's Saw Mill At Plainfield, Illinois." Written and printed at Plainfield, Ill., 1946. (Not copyrighted!)

Melton, J. Gordon, **Log Cabins to Steeples.** Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1974.

Pennewell, Almer, **A Voice in the Wilderness.** Nashville, Tennessee: The Parthenon Press, Pre-1965. I'm not sure of the date. (Not copyrighted!)

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**Will County Bicentennial Commemorative Edition.** Published by Will County Bicentennial Committee and Endorsed by Illinois Bicentennial Commission. Joliet, Illinois: Peterson Printing Craftsmen, Inc., May, 1973. (Cited here as the **Will County History.** Based on the original: **The History of Will County, Illinois.** Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr., & Co., 186 Dearborn Street, 1878. The part I used in this book was the "History of Will County." Written by the Hon. George H. Woodruff. This history is often referred to as "Woodruff's History.")



## **Richard J. Crook**

### **About the Author**

Mr. Richard J. Crook resides with his family, his wife Marcia and their two children, Stephen and Susan, at 800 Arnold Street here in Plainfield. Mr. Crook is employed by the Joliet Township High Schools and teaches history at the West Campus where he has taught for the last eleven years. He came here from Wisconsin in 1965 where he had taught for the previous six years on both the high school and junior high school levels. He was born, grew up, and educated in Wisconsin. He received his B.S. degree from Wisconsin State College-Platteville and his M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison both in the field of history and education. Since 1964 he has done much additional graduate work around the United States. He was the recipient of two N.D.E.A. (National Defense Educational Act) grants in 1967 & 1969. The first at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind. on "Backgrounds of Communism: in Europe, Asia, and Latin America." The second at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. on "Urban Crises and Black history." In 1970 he was the recipient of a scholarship from the Joliet Life Insurance

Underwriters and went back to his Alma Mater in Wisconsin for some additional graduate work in history. Since then he has also attended two Western Writer's Workshops at Utah State University in Logan, Utah in 1972 & again in 1974. He has also done some graduate work in Educational Administration through extension from Northern Illinois University-DeKalb.

Some of you might remember Mr. Crook's "Ramblings in History" which appeared in the **Plainfield Enterprise** during Illinois' Sesqui-Centennial in 1968-1969. He received recognition for those articles from Ralph G. Newman, the State Chairman of the Sesqui-Centennial. Mr. Crook has also been very active the last two years with the Bicentennial observance on the state, county, and local levels. He was one of 38 teachers from Illinois chosen to write a "Teacher's Resource Guide, K-12" on teaching the American Revolution. He was chairman of a group in Will County who write "Teaching Strategies on Local History." He also wrote a section, as did his wife, in the book, **Plainfield, Then and Now**. He and his wife both do free-lance writing, so along with everything else they are busy people.

Along with his teaching, reading, and writing, Mr. Crook's hobbies include: traveling, movies, television, camping, canoeing, hunting, fishing, bowling, golf, and tennis. He is an avid sports enthusiast, although not so active any more, but still an interested spectator, especially in football and baseball.

Along with everything else, Mr. Crook is active in church and community affairs. He is active in many organizations, including the Plainfield Lions Club.





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